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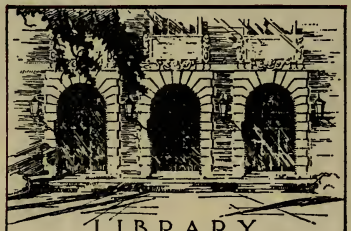

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MR. WARRENNE,

THE MEDICAL PRACTITIONER.

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THE MEDICAL PRACTITIONER.

A NOVEL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "CONSTANCE D'OYLEY,"
"MARGARET CAPEL," &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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MR. WARRENNE,

THE MEDICAL PRACTITIONER.

CHAPTER I.

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds
Or bends with the remover to remove:
Oh! no: it is an ever fixed mark
That looks on tempests and is never shaken:
It is the star, to every wandering bark
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
Shakespeare.

Early in the Autumn Alice and Captain Scudamore were married. Nothing could be simpler than the preparations—nothing quieter

than the wedding. It was arranged that the young people should live at the Woodlands, and Mrs. Thorns promised to continue her superintendance of every thing both in and out of doors.

Maud did not feel the parting with her sister as much as all the neighbours agreed that she would. It was hardly a separation. They met almost every day, and if it were too rainy for Alice and Maud to meet, Dick was sure to be sent to Erlesmede with some message to Mr. Warrenne or his daughter. Now that the great occupation of attending to Alice was withdrawn from her, Maud found more time to attend to herself; she read more, she played more; she improved herself in sketching; she was a great deal with Mrs. Creswick, whose society was always improving, and she felt, to her great delight, that she was more and more indispensable to her father's comfort every day. And the beautiful little Lyles were at the Ferns during their mother's absence

abroad, and they held her company during the morning, while her father was out on his rounds. There was not a corner in Mr. Warrenne's house, not a nook of his garden that they did not know perfectly well. Karl was never at all surprised to see them come into the stable to pat the white horse, nor did the cook take it amiss when they found their way into the kitchen, to ask for a bit of bread to feed the birds, or a draught of milk for themselves. There was a sense of liberty as soon as they got within the Warrenne's gate, which they could never quite feel before the stately Mrs. Creswick.

There was but one little drawback in the mind of Maud—she was very sensitive and a little jealous, and it was rather a trial to her to see that, for the first time in her life, she was not the first object with Mr. Scudamore. As she had said to him, she was quite willing that Dick should prefer her sister, but she did not care that *he* should like Alice better than her-

self. But it seemed to be a trial at the Woodlands between Captain Scudamore, his father, and Mrs. Thorns, which should spoil Alice the most completely. Mr. Scudamore and Mrs. Thorns doted on Alice because she had been the means of retaining Dick in England, and it is difficult to say which felt the most grateful to her for this piece of service.

Maud was sincerely rejoiced to find that month succeeded month and Captain Scudamore's attachment to her sister was as warm as ever. She had shared some of her father's misgivings on this subject. Nobody could doubt how ardent was his devotion to Alice before marriage; but she had glanced with some dismay at the future. She had feared, with her father, that he might find his home monotonous, and gradually seek his pleasure elsewhere.

But the Woodlands was a home which might have contented a more fastidious person than Captain Scudamore. The house was

excellent—more like an old manor-house than a farm, with its deep stone porch, and large casement windows. It was beautifully situated, and as the property belonged to Mr. Scudamore, he had felt an interest in improving the woods and fields in appearance as well as in value. Broad belts of beech and hazel divided his fields, and screened the hills behind his house; and along these hedgerows Dick and Alice might be seen to wander, as the spring came on, gathering primroses and violets, very much like two lovers, although they had been married nearly six months. Mrs. Thorns fulfilled her promise of taking all the household cares off Alice — she accomplished her task with a great deal of bustle and boasting, it is true, but also with much skill and economy. But one duty which had devolved on Alice since her marriage, Mrs. Thorns made no attempt to appropriate to herself. She could not avoid going more into society. Mr. Scudamore was much liked and respected

by his neighbours, and everybody called upon her and invited her. She was obliged to return these visits with her husband. In this way she came to know numbers of people who had never troubled themselves about her as Alice Warrenne, and who knew nothing at all about Maud. It surprised her very much to find herself so completely taking precedence of her sister, but it did her no harm. She was as simple and modest, and as anxious to escape from notice as she had ever been.

Maud was all the better for this alteration in affairs. With her quick intelligent mind, she had been everything to Alice, and she had felt her importance and usefulness. It gave her a feeling of self-reliance and decision, which with her youth and beauty was rather engaging, but which might have been carried too far. She learned a useful lesson in finding that people could do as well without her as with her—it softened her estimate of herself. Mrs. Creswick used, inwardly, to hope

that circumstances might work as favourable a change on her niece Florence. It was rather a favourite topic of hers, the use of circumstances in forming the character and the importance of not neglecting or perverting so valuable a means. Maud had the advantage of being able to discuss her feelings openly with Mrs. Creswick—and on this subject she could speak freely and without any bitterness. She felt that although not so much wanted, she was as well loved as ever by her sister, and that she had lost nothing, though Alice had gained in Mr. Scudamore's regard.

"I am anxious about Florence," said Mrs. Creswick, one morning as they were walking together in the garden at the Ferns; "she writes in bad spirits, and evidently in very poor health. My brother does not notice it, but at present he is so wrapped up in his infant son that he has no thoughts to spare for any one else."

"You are expecting them home soon, are you not?" asked Maud.

"Yes, in a few weeks; Mr. Reynolds wishes to purchase Heathfield, which is now for for sale; and he ought to be here to conduct the affair himself."

"It is a fine place," said Maud, "and very near to Forrel Court."

"Ah! you can tell me how Mrs. Digby is," said Mrs. Creswick.

"She grows weaker every day," said Maud, sadly. "Papa fears she will not live through this month."

"A very interesting and very peculiar person," remarked Mrs. Creswick.

"Very much so," said Maud; "when, you know, she became acquainted with Leonard from that terrible accident, she would not let Papa introduce Alice and me to her, though she often asked him about us. She said she felt that she had not long to live, and it was not worth while for either party to form an

acquaintance that must so soon be broken. But we were saying something about Miss Reynolds."

"It is a great change for Florence," said Mrs. Creswick. "She had so entirely depended on being the mistress of her father's house, that it would require more philosophy than she possesses, to bear his marriage with composure or indifference."

"But I should think it was *now* a matter of very little consequence to her," said Maud, "since I understand that she is shortly to leave her father's house for a house of her own."

"Yes, her marriage is to take place as soon as possible after her return," said Mrs. Creswick; "my friend, Mr. Courtenay, has borne her absence with exemplary patience; but there is now no reason for delay."

"People are surprised at almost every match that takes place," said Maud; "and, therefore, it is not a very new remark to

say, that I was surprised when I heard of this one."

"And why, my dear," asked Mrs. Creswick, smiling.

"Because, from what I recollect of Mr. Courtenay, I should imagine that he would be very exacting in his choice of a wife; and Miss Reynolds was thought to be—rather—a flirt."

"I wish I could defend the best and most sensible men in their selection of a wife," said Mrs. Creswick; "indeed it can hardly be called a *choice*, so completely are they at the mercy of the first pretty face and engaging manner that comes in their way. But I am afraid Mr. Courtenay is wholly without defence; for I imagine his engagement to have been simply the result of pique."

"Of pique, my dear Mrs. Creswick? That is very bad! That gives me a low idea of his character!" said Maud, stooping to gather a wild hyacinth that sprang up among the moss

which carpeted the secluded walk which they were pacing.

"I admit that it is wrong," said Mrs. Creswick; "but he is so great a favourite of mine, that I won't allow it to be low."

"Oh, Mrs. Creswick!" said Maud, "how poor a love must that be which can turn to pique! and how low a sense of justice must he have, to vent his spite, not on the woman who has refused him (there would be some sense in that), but upon the woman who is credulous enough to believe that he speaks the truth—that his attentions are an earnest tribute to her merits, instead of a pitiful mortification at the indifference of another! I have a very shabby opinion of men, Mrs. Creswick; there's hardly one of them, however just in his dealings to his own sex, who would not lie like a coward to a woman! I have a very base pitiful idea, I can tell you, of this Mr. Courtenay!"

"Of course," said Mrs. Creswick, smiling at her young friend's vehemence; "you have a

whole crowd of exceptions to that little statement of yours."

"Oh, yes, for instance, papa—and the Scudamores. I think that Dick, though you will understand me when I say that he is not at all the kind of person I envy Alice in having for a husband, is a plain-dealing warm-hearted man, who could not, for it is not in his nature, swerve by one hair's breadth from the truth in any statement that he might make to any one, man or woman!"

"And you think that if a man makes an offer on any ground but that of love, he is guilty of an act of treachery?"

"The very basest!" exclaimed Maud. "He has no right to marry with any other feeling. You may *esteem* a friend—you may *regard* a neighbour—you may be *kind* to any one in distress, but these feelings are wholly insufficient to make such a tie as marriage sacred or even respectable! Not that I believe in all that nonsense," she added, turning to gather

piece of sweetbriar as she spoke, "except perhaps in the case of Alice and Dick."

"What shall we do to make you alter your opinion?" said Mrs. Creswick, laughing.

"Do you remember Shakespeare's beautiful lines?" continued Maud—

> "——————— Love is not love
> Which alters, when it alteration finds,
> Or bends with the remover to remove."

"Such a sentiment as that is worth accepting. No pique could induce a man to transfer such homage as that to another person! I think," she added, little imagining how near she was to the truth, "that if Leonard were to love, it would be after that fashion."

"That is the very finest of his sonnets," said Mrs. Creswick. "But sometimes, when I have doubted whether an idea is quite rational, I have amused myself by carrying it on a little farther; and if it then becomes absurd, I feel convinced that the first thought is unreasonable. Now I met with a sentence this

morning in a little work of Balzac's, which is merely an exaggeration of the lines you have repeated. I don't often read or quote French authors, but as near as I can recollect the passage runs thus—

"L'amour, Madame la Duchesse, ce n'est pas d'aimer une noble femme, une Clarisse; le bel effort, ma foi! L'amour c'est de se dire, 'Celle que j'aime est une infâme, elle me trompe, elle me trompera, c'est une rouée, et d'y courir, et d'y trouver le bleu de l'ether, les fleurs du paradis.'"

"Oh, that is shocking!" said Maud. "Where a woman is unworthy it is contemptible of a man to persist in loving her. If Mr. Courtenay had this excuse for his *pique* I acquit him. Ah! here come the children," she said, running forward to meet them. "Look, darlings! there is the postman at the green gates: now, a race to see which will get Aunt Creswick's letters!"

The two children set off down the gravel

walk, and presently returned, Lucy with the letters, and Edward with a couple of newspapers.

"Good news, my dears!" said Mrs. Creswick, looking up from the letter she was reading; "papa and mamma are on their road home; they expect to be here about the end of the month."

The children raised their eyes to Mrs. Creswick's face, then they turned uneasily to Maud, then looked at each other.

"Are *you* glad, Lucy?" said Edward, spreading out his fingers in the restless way children have when they are not comfortable.

"Oh, yes!" sighed Lucy.

"A dear little new brother coming home too, for you to play with," said Mrs. Creswick.

Lucy's eyes sparkled. "That will be nice," she said.

Edward hesitated. "There's Karl, and Undine, and the white horse," he said, as if trying to balance the two attractions.

"And two new calves at the Woodlands," said Lucy.

"And Alice's tame pigeons," said Edward.

"Oh, and the guinea pigs Dick bought her!" cried Lucy.

"And the young rabbits," said Edward.

"No, I'm not glad," said Lucy, taking firm hold of Maud's dress.

"How I wish they always lived with me," said Maud, snatching her up, and covering her with kisses.

"Papa and mamma will be very glad to see their little ones again," said Mrs. Creswick.

"And so will they be glad when the time comes, naughty things," said Maud, caressing them.

"We must not expect too much from the affection of children," said Mrs. Creswick, when the little ones were at a distance with their hoops; "they live in the present, and the tame rabbits here would carry it against the little brother in Italy at any time. But we

were talking about Florence and Mr. Courtenay."

"So we were," said Maud; "I was quarrelling with his *pique* you know. But no doubt the match is agreeable to you, as you like him so much."

"As regards Florence I rejoice," said Mrs. Creswick; "I never thought she would have married a superior man—for that I consider him, in spite of this one error of judgment. I think he will raise her character, and be watchful over her conduct; and in doing so is more likely to secure her lasting self-respect and happiness than if she married a man who fell in love with her beauty, and afterwards wearied of her levity and caprice."

"And with regard to *his* happiness?" said Maud.

"Florence is improving," said Mrs. Creswick; "her letters shew that she is becoming more conscientious and more humble; she will feel, I hope, when she marries, that it is her

duty to secure the esteem and attachment of her husband by every means in her power. They may go on smoothly together; and with regard to happiness, my dear Maud, this world is not its abode; and at my age I have seen so many fair prospects clouded, and so many love matches turn into discontent and misery, that I almost begin to think, with *Mrs. Malaprop,* that in matrimony it is safest to set out with a little aversion!

CHAPTER II.

Ehret die Frauen! sie flechten und weben
Himmlische Rosen in's irdische Leben,
Flechten der Liebe begluckendes Band,
Und in der Grazie zuchtigem Schleir,
Nahren sie wachsam das evige Feuer
Schoner Gefuhle mit heiliger Hand.

Schiller.

THE next morning Mr. Warrenne was summoned to see Mrs. Digby, who was seriously ill. As he was not likely to be home in time for church, he dropped Maud at the Woodlands, that she might accompany her sister and the Scudamore's. She found Alice standing at the window of the breakfast-room, feeding her tame pigeons, which were clustered on the window-

sill. Captain Scudamore standing beside her, was holding some peas in his hand, which she took one by one, and offered to her favourites.

As soon as Alice heard her sister's voice she turned quickly round, and ran to meet her.

"Take care; bless my heart! you will run up against the table;" exclaimed Captain Scudamore, catching hold of her, and letting the peas fall to the ground.

The pigeons scared by this sudden movement, rose from the window-sill into the air with a rushing sound, and after wheeling round two or three times, dropped one by one into their old places again.

Mrs. Thorns, who was reading a large black letter Bible at the carved walnut-tree table, looked up. "Hollo! what's that little humbug about now?" she asked.

"She is always getting into mischief," said Captain Scudamore, as he shook hands with Maud. "She had quite an adventure yesterday."

"Yes; quite an adventure!" said Alice, laughing.

"What was it?" asked Maud.

"You know the pond in the field at the bottom of the garden," said Captain Scudamore.

"Dear Alice, the pond?" said Maud

"Yes;" said Alice, putting aside Captain Scudamore with her little hand, and advancing eagerly to tell the story herself: "I heard Dick's voice in the field, and I went through the garden to meet him; but you know the descent to the pond is very gradual on the side nearest the house, and I missed my way, and got down among the osiers, and into the water. I was so frightened when I felt the wet; but I called to Dick, and he soon came to me."

"And a pretty couple of geese you looked," said Mrs. Thorns; "Dick as pale as a sheet, and you with your teeth chattering, and your clothes all drenched."

"I have had a railing put up round the

pond," said Captain Scudamore; "I should have thought of it before."

"I don't see that," said Mrs. Thorns; "if the brat had done as she was bid, and not gone beyond the garden, she would have run into no danger."

"Ah! but she never does as she is bid," said Captain Scudamore, smiling at her.

"Who has the old man got with him, Dick?" asked Mrs. Thorns, looking through the window.

She used this designation when speaking of her brother, to distinguish him from his son.

"Sir Frederic Manning," replied Captain Scudamore.

"Hem! he comes here after Alice," replied Mrs. Thorns.

"What nonsense!" said Captain Scudamore; "he comes here solely because he has nothing to do."

"Hollo! Queen Maud here?" exclaimed

Mr. Scudamore, as he entered; this is capital; this is just the thing;—you will come back and dine with us. Oh! yes; you must! Sir Frederic, this is Miss Warrenne, my little girl's sister, you know."

Sir Frederic, after speaking to the others, stared very hard at Maud, and then said—

"You are extremely like your brother."

"Well, I believe I am," replied Maud; then turning to Mr. Scudamore, who was dropping some beautiful double violets one by one into Alice's hand, she said—"Save some for me, grandfather."

Mr. Scudamore held a few out to her, and as she approached to take them, he whispered —"Now's your time, Queen Maud—a handsome young Baronet, that any one would say was made on purpose for you—and the coast clear, too—not another pretty woman within twenty miles, except little Alice; and she's not to be had. I know you had him in your eye when you refused Dick!"

"In the first place, grandfather," said she, crimsoning with anger, "I did *not* refuse Dick;—and in the next, let me remind you, this is very pretty conversation for Sunday morning."

"Well, when do you go to Rome again?" asked Mrs. Thorns of Sir Frederic.

"Never, I hope," said Sir Frederic, "I have accomplished my errand there—and I never was so tired of a place in my life—I staid there three months."

"And what did you go for, Sir Frederic?" asked Alice, simply.

"That's a stupid question, little one!" said Mrs. Thorns, "you don't suppose he will tell *you* what took him there."

"Yes—I will;" returned Sir Frederic, "I went to have a statue made for me."

"And did it satisfy you?" asked Alice.

"Oh yes—perfectly."

"There, that will do," said Mrs. Thorns, "don't ask him any more—he will only fib and

fib ;—it is quite awful to hear him—let it be a statue if he likes—we don't believe him a bit the more for—"

"But, Mrs. Thorns, upon my honour, I went to have a statue executed under my directions!" exclaimed Sir Frederic, with great vehemence. "The sculptor lived at Rome, and I could not describe what I wanted by letter I declare."

"Ah! ah! that will do," interrupted Mrs. Thorns. "Lived at Rome, did he?—a great many people live at Rome!—as I said to Frank Barton."

"But, Mrs. Thorns," persisted Sir Frederic, "I protest you may see it any day at my house."

"Yes—make me believe you trotted over to Rome to get a statue of Julius Cæsar—I suppose you galloped to Stutgard on the same errand last Autumn twelvemonth, to get a statue made of Mademoiselle Moor."

"Upon my word, Mrs. Thorns!" cried Sir Frederic, really growing angry.

"Hush, there! that's a good man—don't let us talk before all these young people of such matters;" said Mrs. Thorns, her eyes twinkling with enjoyment, I'll come and see your Julius Cæsar one of these days."

"Well, we are going to church some of us," said Captain Scudamore.

"I don't care if I go with you," said Sir Frederic.

"Do," said Mr. Scudamore. "I say Queen Maud," he added, "I'll see and make him give you his arm."

"And I won't take it, I warn you, grandfather;" said Maud.

"I suppose you are not going, you wicked old woman?" said Mr. Scudamore, addressing his sister.

"Not I! what should I do there?" exclaimed Mrs. Thorns, thumping the black letter Bible with her fist. "*This* is my church! I don't believe a word old Ranger says. Tells you not to use your horses on Sunday, and

rides home in his own carriage! There are your parsons! But he is a good-looking man, and the women are all on his side. Eh! Mrs. Maud?"

"I am sure I wish him all sorts of good,' said Maud, laughing. "His best friends can't oftener wish him a stall in C——— Cathedral than I do."

"A stall! a tombstone you mean," said Mrs. Thorns.

"No, indeed," said Maud, "I think he would make a beautiful Prebend."

"Dick takes care of Alice, of course," said Mr. Scudamore, glancing at Sir Frederic.

"Then the least you can do, grandfather, is to take care of *me*," said Maud, slipping her hand into Mr. Scudamore's arm and pressing her little prayer-book upon him."

"I tell you what, Queen Maud, there must be an end one day to this sort of thing, you know," said Mr. Scudamore, in a doleful tone. "It can't go on for ever—I am sure I

do all I can for you—but you are so perverse."

"Then how light your conscience must feel, dear grandfather," returned Maud, "and what a pleasant reflection that is, on a Sunday morning."

"A fine looking man, with a fine estate—and as kind hearted a fellow as ever lived," said Mr. Scudamore, as they passed out of the gate. Sir Frederic being a little in advance, with Captain Scudamore and Alice.

"Since he is just out of hearing, grandfather, I may remark that I think him a very ordinary looking man; that I know his estate is mortgaged and embarrassed in a shameful manner; shameful, because it is owing to his own extravagance, and that I wonder at you for recommending to me a person who crowns all his virtues by the exemplary one of hard drinking."

"Well; I don't say he is as good-looking as Dick, for example," said Mr. Scudamore.

"I should think not," retorted Maud. "Secondly—"

"Well, secondly; I don't think a little extravagance a crying sin in a young man who, if he had a motive, that is a wife, Queen Maud, would very soon turn over a new leaf."

"Ah, so you think! go on," said Maud.

"And as for his drinking, I don't believe a word of it; perhaps when he was a younger man he may have now and then taken a little too much; but *I* never saw him drunk, and I know his habits are sober, Queen Maud—and I speak of everybody as I find them!"

"What a profoundly wise plan that is!" said Maud; "to judge of others, not as they are, but as they appear to you. There are some cases, Mr. Scudamore, in which it is wiser to believe what you hear, than what you see!"

"Well; I'll tell you, Queen Maud, why people say so much against him," continued Mr. Scudamore; "because he does not fawn

upon them, and is, perhaps a little blunt and eccentric in his conduct, and because all the old dowagers in the county can make nothing of him for their daughters!"

"Bravo, grandfather!" returned Maud; "and now perhaps, you can tell me what the text was last Sunday morning?"

"And when will you come to see my new statue, Mrs. Scudamore?" asked Sir Frederic.

"Whenever Dick will take me," replied Alice.

"Oh! he is an idle man; he can bring you any day—say to-morrow?"

"Well; to-morrow—provided it will not hurt your statue for me to touch it, for that is my only way of seeing, you know."

"You shall do what you please with it! And when are we to have our famous cowslip gathering?"

"Oh! very soon; you are to come to us for that, you know!"

"I shall not forget it. I have pledged myself to Mrs. Thorns for some time past."

"How soon, Dick, will they be fit to gather?" asked Alice.

"In a week or ten days; there is one just blown!"

"Get it for me, Dick."

Captain Scudâmore stopped to gather the cowslip; and Mr. Scudamore and Maud joined them.

"Where is your brother now, Miss Warrenne?" asked Sir Frederic.

"At Damascus," said Maud; "he is making a collection of inlaid weapons."

"Rather an expensive taste," said Captain Scudamore.

"He has the *de quoi*," replied Maud, smiling to herself.

"I should like to know how," remarked Mr. Scudamore.

"You will know one day, grandfather," said Maud.

"And very soon, I am afraid," added Alice, who knew that Mrs. Digby was dangerously ill.

"Here's a mystery," said Mr. Scudamore, "I should like to get to the bottom of it!"

"How curious the grandfather is!" said Maud.

"And I would not even tell Dick!" said Alice.

"I should like to go to Damascus; it is singular that I have never been in Syria!" said Sir Frederic. "I might start next week! Let me see; the packets for Alexandria leave on the —"

"Now, can you not let Damascus alone, and sit down quietly at the Manor-house?" said Mr. Scudamore.

"What to do?" asked Sir Frederic.

"Why, at your time of life you ought to be married and settled!" said Mr. Scudamore.

"Married! *la belle avance!*" returned Sir Frederic. "I can't afford it!"

"If you marry an heiress," said Alice, thinking she had found a complete solution to the difficulty.

"I have declared against that, absolutely, Mrs. Scudamore," returned Sir Frederic.

"And what an inviting prospect for any who has it in his power to travel," exclaimed Maud, "to be told to sit down *quietly* at the Manor-house!"

"Then in my place, Miss Warrenne," said Sir Frederic, "you would—"

"Look out for the next packet to Alexandria," replied Maud.

"What, before the cowslips are gathered?" said Alice.

They all laughed.

"Come, come; we are going to church—be serious," said Maud.

"Yes, we will, but you should not persuade Sir Frederic," said Alice.

"No; you should not persuade Sir Fred-

eric, you viper!" said Mr. Scudamore, in a low tone.

"I know, grandfather, you call me names when you are most pleased with me," said Maud, smilingly.

"And, seriously, I will not start before I have gathered the cowslips," said Sir Frederic.

"That is right," said Alice.

They went into the church—Mr. Scudamore still shaking his head to himself at Maud's delinquencies. As there was no room for Sir Frederic in the Scudamore's pew, he went into the next seat. This looked odd, because he had a large pew of his own at the other side of the church, fitted up with red velvet hassocks and arm chairs. But he had very seldom made use of it, because until he had become intimate with the Scudamores, his visits to church had been few and far between; and when he had accompanied them of late, he had always taken the place in their pew which Maud occupied. Mrs. Stapylton, who

entered at the head of her four daughters, looked maliciously at him—for she feared he was attaching himself to Alice—and she remarked to Albina (the one destined for Sir Frederic), that an attachment to a married woman was always, unluckily, more difficult to counteract than one for a single girl, and that she had great claims upon her daughter's gratitude for the exertions she intended to make in her behalf.

And when they stood up for the morning hymn, and Alice and Maud were joining reverently in the service, I am sorry to say that Mrs. Stapylton was gazing into the red velvet pew, and picturing to herself Albina throned in the right hand arm chair, and Sir Frederic in the left; and Mr. Scudamore's eyes travelled in the same direction, and then came back to Maud with a woeful expression, as if he felt quite sure that, however hard he might work in her behalf, she would obstinately counteract all his endeavours. It happened

that the first lesson was from the beautiful book of Ruth; and Sir Frederic, after listening to a few words, rather impatiently, rose, and leaning over to Captain Scudamore, whispered,

"I say, Scudamore, tell your wife that my statue is taken from that chapter."

"Your statue!" said Captain Scudamore.

"Ruth, gleaning," replied Sir Frederic; and then he sat down contentedly again.

"Oh! I thought it was Julius Cæsar," remarked Alice, when her husband had given her this piece of information, and then, forgetting the statue, she directed her attention to Mr. Ranger.

"How I wonder what he had to say to Captain Scudamore in the middle of the service!" said Mrs. Stapylton, to her eldest daughter, as they left the church.

"I would give the world to know, mamma!" returned Miss Albina; "it did look so very odd!"

Miss Emily, who was in love with a cornet

of Dragoons, and Miss Sarah, who was trying for the Curate at Forrel, and Miss Laura, who was a romp, and cared for nobody, quickened their steps the moment they heard this subject started.

"Make haste, for goodness sake, if you don't want to be bored to death!" exclaimed Miss Laura, who always spoke her mind. "Mamma has begun prosing about that everlasting Sir Frederic Manning."

CHAPTER III.

What cylid Deth? Alas! why wold he sle' the?
Occleve.

A wickid tonge wol away deme amis.
A Balade of Gode Counseil, by Dan. Thom. Lidgat.

Pack clouds, away! and welcome day!
With night we banish sorrow:
Sweet air blow soft! mount lark aloft!
To give my love good-morrow!
Heywood.

That evening Mrs. Digby died. As Mr. Warrenne never mentioned any details respecting his patients in his family, Maud was left in profound ignorance of the facts connected with her last moments. She was, therefore, unable to tell such of the neighbours as

enquired, whether Mrs. Digby died fast or slow, or hard or soft. For it must not be inferred because the Warrennes' visiting list was circumscribed, that they therefore were not on speaking terms with any of their neighbours. The few families who lived near were very gracious in their manner whenever they met Maud, and used to ask quite affectionately after her family. They also pitied her very largely, whenever her name was mentioned. They pitied her for not having a carriage—for not being in society—for her sister having married before her—for never having been to school, and therefore, as they thought, received no education. They pitied her (on speculation) for being shy—for not knowing how to give a dinner party—for not going to London, and for wearing straw bonnets: in fact, they pitied her situation in every point of view, and did everything but try to mend it.

Some people have such a quantity of pity to spare, that they have some to bestow even

on persons with whom they are not acquainted. This was the case to a remarkable extent with the hosier's wife, who happened to meet Maud on her way to the post-office with a letter for Leonard, and forthwith began to pity Mrs. Digby.

"So poor Mrs. Digby is dead at last," said she, in a tone of extreme compassion; "after such a tedious illness! I did *so* pity her! So melancholy it seemed for her, poor thing, living all alone there, at Forrel Court, so very lonely for an invalid."

Now, as Mrs. Digby was rather prouder than usual, and was not in the habit of associating with hosier's wives, even when they kept a carriage as Mrs. Sharpe did, it need not be said that that lady had never been an eye-witness to the solitude of Forrel Court.

Maud, who was always singularly embarrassed by Mrs. Sharpe's manners, and never knew what to say to her, made some vague

reply, accompanied by a gesture as if she wished to move on to the post-office.

"But, Miss Warrenne," said Mrs. Sharpe, detaining her, "I hope there was a physician called in—I do trust that poor, dear lady had farther advice."

Maud was happy to relieve her inquietude by assuring her that Dr. ——— (naming one of the first physicians of the day) had been in frequent attendance upon her, during the last three months of her life.

She did not add, that nothing but her father's urgent remonstrances would have induced Mrs. Digby to permit a physician to be called in.

"I am truly thankful to hear this. I am rejoiced indeed to know that Dr. ——— was with her—it must be such a relief—such a satisfaction to her relatives, you know!" said Mrs. Sharpe, with a manner that could not fail to be interpreted as meaning—thank Heaven

she was not left to the tender mercies of such an ignorant man as your father!

"As Mrs. Digby had no relations, I believe you are the only person likely to be much rejoiced by the visits of Dr. ———," replied Maud, making another move.

There was one fortunate circumstance connected with Mrs. Sharpe's ill-breeding—she was wholly impervious to satire—she was equally incapable of taking a jest or of feeling a reproof. Maud's retort, therefore, fell to the ground, and she rejoined, with much cordiality,—

"I suppose you don't happen to know, Miss Warrenne, who is likely to succeed to Mrs. Digby's property?—a very fine property, poor thing!"

Maud had a mind to ask whether Mrs. Digby was to be pitied for going to Heaven? but she restrained herself, and replied quietly that the will had not yet been opened. Then, disengaging herself from her companion, she

succeeded at last in lodging her letter in the post-office. She could not restrain a smile as she thought how little Mrs. Sharp had suspected the contents of her letter, which she had written that morning by her father's desire, to inform Leonard of Mrs. Digby's death, and to summon him immediately to England.

When Mrs. Digby's will was opened, it was found that she left her estate to Leonard Warrenne on condition that he assumed the name and arms of Digby with his own; and to Alice, in consideration of her blindness, she bequeathed ten thousand pounds.

Of course there was a great commotion in the neighbourhood. Some persons thought Mrs. Digby must have been deranged; others thought naturally enough that she had better have left her property to them. Mrs. Stapylton took the wisest part. She proclaimed to Maud, at the church door, the very next Sunday, that she had always thought Mr. Leonard a very

charming young man, and that she sincerely rejoiced at his good fortune. Perhaps it occurred to her that, by means of one of her four daughters, the property might at last be brought into her family. At any rate, her conduct was in better taste than that of Mrs. Sharpe, who cast on the Warrennes' pew, as she strode up the aisle, a look of such mingled disdain and anger, that Maud had much ado to help bursting out laughing.

Mrs. Sharpe could not endure Mr. Warrenne, for he was too honest, too direct in all his ways, to suit her feelings; the only pleasure that she derived from Mrs. Digby's will, was certainly a vivid one; it consisted in assuring all her neighbours that she was very sorry indeed to find that Mr. Warrenne had lowered himself so much; for it was easy to see how he had employed himself during his long attendance upon Mrs. Digby; and it was only a surprise to her that there was

nobody found to take up the matter, and make it the subject of a law-suit!

When in turn, she said this to Mrs. Creswick, that lady merely replied—

"Mr. Warrenne is one of my great favourites! so, if you please, we will change the subject."

For Mrs. Creswick knew by experience, that all attempts at conviction fail with that kind of women; for as soon as you have distinctly proved the error of what they have advanced, instead of attempting to carry on the argument, they go back to the first statement, and repeat word for word the facts that you have just disproved to them.

Mr. Scudamore was very much pleased that Alice had a legacy—not, as he remarked, that it was wanted, but that it would enable the child to have some indulgences which she had hitherto gone without. She could have a low carriage, with a pair of ponies, which he had once heard her wish for; and he should

build her a green-house, for she was as fond of flowers as her father. He also remarked at the same time that he was sorry Queen Maud had been left out, but that without doubt she was handsome enough to get married without a sixpence, if she would be a little less perverse.

Maud rejoiced, without the drawback of a single thought, in her sister's fortune; she might be jealous of the regard of those she liked, but it was out of her nature to be envious of money.

As Mrs. Digby's will had been made before Alice married, Captain Scudamore took care to secure the legacy to herself, a proceeding which Alice could not understand, and which she troubled herself little enough about, for her thoughts were all occupied by the approaching cowslip gathering.

At last the cowslips were ready. Mrs. Thorns had kept a watchful eye over them; for her cowslip wine was famous, and though nobody drank it at the Woodlands, yet she

fancied that she saved a great deal of money by it.

Maud's presence on all these occasions was indispensable—not so much for the work she did, as for the spirit she threw into every thing—the air of enjoyment she brought with her.

She was to breakfast at the Woodlands, and her father was to fetch her back in the evening.

It was a delightful morning; the sky one sapphire, and the young green trees swaying and shivering in the fresh breeze. They were early people at the Woodlands. Mr. Scudamore and his son were loitering in the garden when Maud arrived. On the other side of the hedge Mrs. Thorns, with her spade on her shoulder, might be seen in serious converse with Jack Robins.

Alice soon put her pretty head out of the casement window, and called them all in to breakfast, which Mrs. Thorns dispensed with

her usual oddity, and clothed in a costume that defies all description.

Now Mrs. Thorns was very stingy of her sugar; nothing she grudged so much as giving any body an extra lump. It was a constant amusement to Captain Scudamore and Alice to teaze her for more sugar; sometimes they contrived to get the sugar-basin between them, and pillage it at their ease; and sometimes Alice would boldly take out a lump, and nibble it with her little white teeth: then Mrs. Thorns would threaten her with all kinds of disasters, and Mr. Scudamore would laugh, and take her part. After breakfast, while they were providing themselves with baskets, Sir Frederic Manning came in.

"What! you are here at last," said Mrs. Thorns. "I thought all your fine words meant nothing; and that you were going to give me the slip."

"*You,* Mrs. Thorns, you could not think that, when you know how happy I always am

in your society. Which of these baskets am I to have?"

While Mrs. Thorns was selecting a basket for Sir Frederic, Mr. Scudamore could not help giving Maud a few private instructions.

"Now, don't be foolish, Queen Maud," he said; "the man is a Baronet. If you were half as pleasant to him as you are alone with us, you would very soon find yourself Lady Manning;—be lively and amusing, and sing some of your pretty songs after dinner; and I don't see why one basket should not serve you both!"

Maud held up her basket with a laugh, which was the very smallest she could find, and would hold about a handful of cowslips. "I often regret, grandfather, that you had not a few daughters to dispose of," she said; "I am sure you would be indefatigable; and I think it possible you might succeed. But it is not my way, grandfather; so you had better let me alone.

Notwithstanding, Sir Frederic managed to walk beside her as they all went to the cowslip field.

"I am sorry you did not come with your sister to see my Ruth," said Sir Frederic to Maud.

"What's that about his statue? had he one after all?" cried Mrs. Thorns, who was walking stoutly along, with a large hand-basket slung at the end of a spud, and carried over her shoulder as a woodman carries his faggot. "I would have gone with you had I known that."

"Oh! it is beautiful," said Alice, who was walking beside Maud, holding her hand like a child. She is on one knee gleaning, and looking up; her head is turned round so gracefully; and she has some ears of corn in her dress; and Dick was delighted with it.

"Ah! then, he told the truth for once," remarked Mrs. Thorns.

"I tell you what, Mrs. Thorns," said Sir

Frederick, "if you minded what Mr. Ranger told you, you would not think so ill of your neighbours."

"Don't talk to me of Ranger!" exclaimed Mrs. Thorns, who when she did not respect a person seldom prefixed the Mr. to his name—"he is the man for speaking ill of his neighbours. He tried to take away Jack Robins' character, and called him a Sabbath-breaker."

"And you know, Aunt, he did shoot a blackbird one Sunday morning," said Captain Scudamore.

"And startled Mr. Ranger's horse; you know," said Alice.

"If he did, it was because he said he would," returned Mrs. Thorns; "the villain had been at his peas for days, and he said he would shoot him the very next time: and now set to work all of you, and gather. I am going off to hoe the turnips."

So saying, she slung down the large basket

for the use of the society, and took her way across the meadow.

The cowslips scented the air deliciously; the wind blew pretty strongly, and rustled the lady's dresses, and scattered Alice's long bright curls all about her face.

"Dick, my hair teazes me," said Alice, who vainly tried to clear it away.

Captain Scudamore tried to put it up under her hat, but as he could not manage it, Maud took it in hand, and secured her ringlets behind her ears.

Alice, then sitting on the grass, gathered right and left all the cowslips within her reach. All her gestures were so childlike and innocent, and the style of her beauty so youthful, that no one could look at her without a sort of compassionate admiration.

"She is extremely pretty," said Sir Frederic to Maud, "you do not in the least resemble her."

"No;" said Maud, smiling: "see Dick, my basket is nearly full."

"Such a scandalous little basket," said Captain Scudamore; and he emptied it suddenly into Alice's lap.

"You may fill it again!" said Maud, laughing; and she went to sit under the walnut-tree, where Mr. Scudamore was composedly looking on.

"You are soon tired," he said.

"Why yes, grandfather," said Maud. "I am afraid my tastes are not very pastoral."

"They are not, Queen Maud—you are born to be a great lady—to live in a Manor-house—and to have nothing to do, but to order your servants—and now's your time."

"Thank you grandfather; I am quite as well pleased to think that Leonard will have all this good luck—how he will enjoy the thick woods and the mossy paths at Forrel Court: and the books and pictures—far more than if he had been born to expect them. We may look for him in three weeks, don't

you think, grandfather? we wrote a fortnight ago—how soon do letters reach Smyrna?"

"Certainly, Queen Maud, there are very few women like you!" said Mr. Scudamore, admiringly.

Maud laughed.

"Look, Grandfather, they are all following our example," she said; "they all seem to think that a pastoral life has its limits."

As there were three maid servants and two farm boys hard at work gathering, the amateurs felt priviledged to leave off when it pleased them. They came and sat round on the grass under the tree.

"It is growing warm," said Captain Scudamore; "Alice seems to have had enough of it."

"Oh! yes, the sun is so hot," said Alice, taking off her hat, and shaking down her beautiful ringlets.

"I say, Miss Warrenne," said Sir Frederic; "I believe I made a very stupid speech to you

just now—it did not sound over civil at any rate—and the worst of it is, that if you try to explain away a blunder of that kind you only make it appear more serious."

"Oh! I know what you mean," said Maud, laughing; "but I assure you I took your speech literally: as it was intended."

"What's it all about?" asked Mr. Scudamore.

"A story of a curious old gentleman who always asked questions," replied Maud.

Sir Frederic burst out laughing—Mr. Scudamore shook his head, but laughed too.

"You are a termagant, Queen Maud, but it becomes you," said Mr. Scudamore.

"I should think that every thing you did became you," added Sir Frederic.

"You owed me that," said Maud, with a laugh; "now you have paid your debts."

"Hollo! there's a carriage-and-four coming up the hill," said Captain Scudamore.

"A carriage?—so there is!—and four

posters!" said Sir Frederic, rising himself up to look.

"Whose carriage, Dick?" asked Alice.

"I don't know. I can hardly see the carriage," said Captain Scudamore.

The knoll on which they were sitting overlooked the road, and as the carriage came slowly up the hill they could see the travellers.

"The Reynolds'!" exclaimed Maud. "Mr. and Mrs. Reynolds—look, grandfather!—and Florence Reynolds!"

"*That* Florence Reynolds!" exclaimed Sir Frederic.

"What! don't you remember her?" said Mr. Scudamore, laughing.

"That sallow thing Florence Reynolds?" repeated Sir Frederic.

"Is she sallow? I'm so glad! She was such a disagreeable cross creature," said Alice.

They all laughed heartily.

"Though it is not exactly right to be glad,

you know," said Maud; "but I agree with Alice, she was very ill-natured."

"I should be sorry if she was ill; but she deserves to be sallow," repeated Alice.

"What a spiteful little thing it is!" said Mr. Scudamore, stroking her shining hair.

"Alice has not forgiven her for all the attention Dick used to pay her!" said Maud, with a merry burst of laughter.

"I! I pay her attention? I always disliked the woman! I believe I never spoke a dozen words to her!" exclaimed Captain Scudamore.

"I know; but I made her believe you did," replied Maud.

"What did you do that for?" said Captain Scudamore, taking Alice's hand.

"Why, to amuse myself. I had settled in my mind that Miss Reynolds should turn your head, and it is a mercy for you that she did not; I don't know how it happened; but I remember I was rather angry that you escaped."

"You don't know how it happened?" said Captain Scudamore, looking with a smile at Alice.

"That's his answer," said Mr. Scudamore.

"He could not have a better," said Sir Frederic.

"They will be neighbours of yours at Heathfield," remarked Mr. Scudamore.

"And of Leonard's, too," said Alice.

"I wonder what Master Leonard will say to her marriage," said Mr. Scudamore. "I always thought there was a kind of liking between him and the fair Florence."

"I don't believe it!" cried Maud.

"You do in your heart, Queen Maud," said Mr. Scudamore.

"I think so, too, from one or two things I have observed," said Captain Scudamore.

"You think wrong, both of you!" persisted Maud.

"Time will show," said Mr. Scudamore.

"But is she really going to marry Courtenay?" asked Sir Frederic.

"Why that I can't say till I see her in the church," replied Mr. Scudamore; "but so it is reported.

"It is all settled," said Maud; "Mrs. Creswick told me of it."

"She will give him the slip yet," said Mr. Scudamore.

"I should think old Reynolds the sort of fellow to keep her up to her traces," said Sir Frederic.

"Now is that a proper way to speak of a lady?" said Alice.

"Rather colloquial!" said Captain Scudamore, laughing.

"I believe I was in love with her for about a week myself," said Sir Frederic.

"In *love*, do you call it?" said Maud, disdainfully.

"On my word I was—or something like it. To be sure she was as different then as any

thing you can conceive—it is a great misfortune to a woman to lose her complexion,"

"I know what Maud is thinking of," said Alice, in a low voice to Captain Scudamore. "I know by her silence—those lines she is so fond of,—

'Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come,
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.'"

"She is quite right," said Captain Scudamore; "how does it end?"

"If this be error and upon me proved,
I never wrote, nor no man ever loved!"

"What lines are they quoting?" asked Sir Frederic, turning to Maud.

"Something about a woman losing her complexion!" replied Maud.

"I don't know what this Mr. Courtenay could be dreaming of to venture on marrying such a coquette," said Alice.

"A little occupation for him to look after

her," said Mr. Scudamore. But I don't know who we shall find for Queen Maud, since we cannot choose for her out of Fuller's Worthies."

"Be quiet, grandfather!" said Maud. "I wish you had five red-haired nieces to get off!"

"I should go to school to Mrs. Stapylton if I had," said Mr. Scudamore.

"Oh! now we are growing scandalous," said Alice; "the grandfather always begins with Mrs. Stapylton when he sets in for a gossip"

"And here comes Mrs. Thorns, to scold us for not gathering her cowslips," said Sir Frederic.

"I tell you what," said Mrs. Thorns, pausing and resting on her hoe; "if there does not come a little rain soon, I would not give much for your turnips! But I thought how it would be; it was very well I had somebody to do my work while you were idling and chattering

here. I have a great mind not to give any of you a drop of my wine!"

"That would be a dreadful alternative," said Mr. Scudamore, laughing and giving Maud his arm; "but as our idling has given us all an appetite, we will go in, with your leave, and see if we can get some luncheon."

"And, in default of the cowslip wine, we will try and put up with a glass of claret," said Captain Scudamore.

"Ah! you will live to see the inside of the Fleet," said Mrs. Thorns, shaking her head; "but never mind!"

"Never mind!" repeated Sir Frederic; "we shall learn to play tennis there, at any rate!"

CHAPTER IV.

En cosas de amor no hay otro rimedio
Que tomar un otro, o poner tierra por medio.
Lopez de Vega.

"I say Lucy," whispered Edward, as the two children were seated in the window of the drawing-room at the Ferns, "I wish we had gone with Maud to-day, to gather the cowslips."

"So do I," said Lucy, "Maud would have made us some cowslip tea."

"And Mrs. Thorns would have given us such a large piece of plum cake," said Edward.

"Yes, she always lets us eat as much as we like," added Lucy. "She says, 'there you monkies, make yourselves sick!'"

"Has not she a hook nose?" said Edward.

"And such an old straw bonnet," said Lucy, laughing.

"Harley says she is not a lady," said Edward.

"Isn't she?" said Lucy, musing.

"Harley says, no lady would wear such old clothes," remarked Edward.

"There she is wrong," said Lucy. "Mrs. Creswick told us not to judge of people by their clothes."

"I say, I wish papa and mamma were not coming home to-day," said Edward.

"So do I," said Lucy, "I don't want to see the new baby!"

"Nor do I," said Edward, "I should like to break its head."

"Hush!" said Lucy, glancing towards Mrs. Creswick.

"How many children has papa got now?" said Edward.

"Four," said Lucy, "there's Florence; and you, and me, and the baby."

"Florence is not a child," said Edward, looking puzzled.

"No; but she belongs to papa," said Lucy.

Edward nodded his conviction to this remark.

"I think I hear the sound of wheels," said Mrs. Creswick, can little Lucy see any thing coming?"

"It is papa's carriage," said Lucy, getting down from the window seat.

"Let us go into the portico and meet them!" said Mrs. Creswick.

As soon as the first bustle of the arrival was over, the children pleased at being kissed and caressed, and hearing a good deal of some pretty toys that mamma had got for them in the carriage, forgot their disappointment about the cows'ips, and were prepared to look with a

favourable eye on the baby who with his two nurses had followed in a post-chaise.

Edward grasped it so tightly when he went to kiss it, that he made it squall. Lucy admired its embroidered robe, and touched its little hands with more timid fingers.

"There, my darling loves—go all of you up stairs," said Mrs. Reynolds, "and I hope you will be very kind to baby and love him very much."

"And now, my dear Florence, let me look at you," said Mrs. Creswick, "I am very glad we have got you back in England again, for it is clear to me that the Continent has not agreed with you at all."

Florence lifted up her eyes to her aunt and smiled, but very sadly.

"We have all great reason to rejoice at finding ourselves again in England," said Mr. Reynolds, "I hope we shall none of us forget the privileges we enjoy as British subjects. I consider that it is a crime to expatriate one-

self for any length of time—and those who reside abroad should forfeit the protection of every government, and be treated as outlaws. Such are my views."

"Which is my room, Aunt Creswick?" said Florence. "Perhaps you will allow me to go up to rest until dinner."

"One moment, my dear," said Mrs. Creswick, laying her hand on her niece's arm, "I see Mr. Courtenay coming across the lawn with the Colonel."

Florence turned paler than before at his name. Mr. Reynolds seemed exceedingly gratified.

"Really, this is a mark of attention,—I did not at all expect to find him here on our arrival—Florence, did you understand that Mr. Courtenay was at the Ferns?"

Mr. Courtenay's entrance protected Florence from the task of replying. She rather wondered how her father expected the coldest courtship to be carried on, since he appeared

so much overcome by every trifling mark of politeness that she received.

There was, however, no particular eagerness in his greeting. He spoke to those nearest to him first, and then advancing to Florence, and taking her hand slightly, he "hoped she was not much fatigued by her journey," remarked that the weather was extremely warm; and then fell back to Mrs. Reynolds' chair, and began laughing with her about her passage from Havre.

"I thought of you on Tuesday," he said; "you must have had a rough night of it."

"Oh, don't remind me of my troubles!" said Mrs. Reynolds. "I expected to die; I told Mr. Reynolds so—I never suffered more!"

"Will you never make a good sailor?" said Mr. Courtenay; "you who have been twice round the Cape!"

"I know; and each time barely escaped with my life; but this shall be the last, I am determined. "Oh, we were such a party!

Both nurses ill, and poor Mr. Reynolds half killed with headache!"

"And what became of the baby?" asked Courtenay.

"Florence took compassion on him, poor little fellow," said Mrs. Reynolds. "She nursed him so carefully; I did not know you were so good a nurse before, dear Florence."

"Are you fond of the sea, Miss Reynolds?" asked Courtenay.

"Far from it," replied Florence; "but I believe I suffered less than any one on board, and therefore I was able to be of some use."

"Well, now tell us the news of the neighbourhood," said Mrs. Reynolds; "who are our nearest neighbours at Heathfield?"

"Your nearest neighbour is Mr. Leonard Warrenne, who has just inherited Forrel Court of the late Mrs. Digby," said Mrs. Creswick.

"Mrs. Digby dead!" exclaimed Mr. Reynolds.

"And Leonard Warrenne her heir!" said Courtenay. "How is that?"

Florence turned deadly white.

"Was he related to her?" asked Mrs. Reynolds.

"Is he in England?" asked Courtenay.

"Is not he very handsome?" said Mrs. Reynolds.

"What was her motive for such a bequest?" asked Mr. Reynolds.

"Mr. Leonard Warrenne (whom you must now, if you please, call Mr. Warrenne Digby) is not related to the late Mrs. Digby, to whom I understand he afforded some service during a storm," replied Mrs. Creswick; "he is not yet arrived in England, but I believe he is expected daily. He is considered remarkably handsome, I believe, my dear Mrs. Reynolds; or, at all events, he *will* be, when he is known to be in possession of an estate of eight thousand a year."

"I hope he won't make ducks and drakes of

it," said Colonel Creswick. "When a man comes into a fortune he did not expect, it is a great temptation."

"Rely upon it he won't be spoiled," said Mrs. Creswick: "I think that this time next year, all those who are now present will agree with me in saying that Leonard Warrenne has not been spoiled by prosperity."

"I agree with you beforehand, Mrs. Creswick," said Courtenay; "he is one of the few persons who deserve wealth; for he has a refinement about him that would ensure its being spent gracefully. I am heartily glad of it. This accounts for some of his vagaries; no doubt Mrs. Digby sent him abroad. She must have been an excellent woman—a woman of discrimination. She has transmitted her estate to a gentleman."

"I am glad to hear that you think so highly of our future neighbour," said Mr. Reynolds; "I trust we may become intimate with him."

"He is a very nice young fellow;" said Colonel Creswick; "we must look about for him, and find him a wife."

"I think we will let him do that for himself," said Mrs. Creswick.

"You are quite right, dearest Madam," replied the Colonel, bowing; "every one should follow his own taste in a selection of such importance."

"I can tell you I shall not let him alone so easily," said Mrs. Reynolds, laughing. "I have thought of twenty people for him already. How glad Lucy Harding would be to catch him, or any one of the five Pattersons!"

"He must not marry just yet, thank you," said Courtenay, smiling, and bending down to Mrs. Reynolds; "I shall want him for my bridesman."

"Oh, fie! you naughty man! I hope Florence did not hear you," said Mrs. Reynolds, laughing.

"Why not?" said Courtenay, coolly; "*she* is in the secret, at any rate."

Florence had fallen back in her chair, faint and bewildered ; she would gladly have left the room, but she dared not make the attempt unaided. The news she had just heard perfectly unnerved her. She trembled so much, that she feared it would be perceived: tears would have relieved her, but how could she dare to weep in the presence of her father, who had betrothed her, and the man to whom she was betrothed. Her tears would be an an insult to them, if their source could have been suspected; and she could imagine with what bitter irony her father would visit upon her the sin of crying for nothing.

"Pray Miss Reynolds," said Courtenay, coming round, and leaning on the back of her chair, "was not this Leonard Warrenne that we are all talking about one of your victims ?"

Florence coloured painfully, but made no reply.

"He does you great credit," pursued Courtenay, "or did. I don't know whether he has

got his heart mended out in Syria; but I assure you he used to wear the willow to a very great extent, and I know you ladies don't like half measures on that subject."

"Oh, Mr. Courtenay!" said Florence.

The distress in her voice was too visible to be mistaken.

"I see," he said to himself; "I should not wonder if she was sorry for it; then he added, aloud—"You are tired to death: you are not a good traveller, Miss Reynolds; you had better put yourself under Mrs. Creswick's care."

Mrs. Creswick came up to her; she was hardly able to stand without assistance; and they went upstairs together to her room.

"Oh! Aunt," said Florence, sinking down on the sofa at the foot of her bed; "if you did but know how I detest him."

"My dear!" said Mrs. Creswick, sitting down beside her, "Your father has ensured your future welfare by this engagement; he

has secured for you a husband whom you will be able to esteem and respect—you would not have chosen so wisely for yourself."

"No doubt Mr. Courtenay is very respectable, Aunt," said Florence, in a dejected tone; "And I have no chance or hope of escaping this marriage," she added.

"And one day, my dear, when the duties of life appear to you of more importance than its pleasures," said Mrs. Creswick, "you will confess to yourself that your father has acted the part of a true friend in thus deciding for you."

Florence saw in an instant that she had nothing to expect from the intervention of her Aunt. She was not in the habit of relieving her feelings by complaining. She dropped the subject.

"I feel really ill, Aunt," she said; "Papa is apt to think that I give way to every little feeling of languor; but you know that has never been one among my many faults. If you will go down and excuse my appearing

again to-day, I shall be so much obliged to you."

Mrs. Creswick readily charged herself with this errand, and re-appeared in the drawing-room to announce that Florence was suffering so much from headache, that she had advised her to go at once to bed.

Mr. Reynolds remarked that the prevalence of headache among young ladies of the present day was singular, and he thought should be checked.

Mrs. Reynolds declared it was that horrid steamer, and regretted she had allowed Florence to fatigue herself with the baby; though, she remarked, there was no help for it at the time—for every one else was ill beside themselves.

Mr. Courtenay was sitting apart, looking over the *Quarterly Review*. He went on reading.

"Mr. Courtenay," said Mrs. Creswick, stopping as she passed to her own chair, "you

must not think me very romantic, nor very curious; but I should like very much to know whether my niece ever gave you any decided marks of preference."

"Not the slightest, I give you my word," said Mr. Courtenay, looking up calmly from his book, "this is a very excellent article on Church Preferment."

CHAPTER V.

Mar.—May I live to see him,
By sweet discourse and gracious demeanour,
Win and bring home a fair wife—
'Tis all I rest ambitious of.

Beaumont and Fletcher.

Maud had one slight passing fear before her brother's return. She feared he might be altered by his travels, and estranged just a little from his family by his acquisition of fortune.

The first moment, as he threw himself from the post-chaise that brought him to the door, and rushed forward to meet his father, undeceived her. That first evening—as they

all three walked in the garden, crowding questions so fast upon each other that there was no possibility of answering them, and hardly a wish to hear anything but the sound of each others voices, when Undine darted around them, and Karl was so long collecting his tools from different corners, that he might oftener cross Leonard's path and exchange with him a laughing remark in his own language—filled Maud with delight and gratitude.

The next morning Leonard was able to discuss his plans. He much wished that his father and sister would at once settle with him at Forrel Court, but that Mr. Warrenne positively declined. He hoped soon to see Leonard marry, and it was both natural and proper that he should then have his house to himself. Leonard declared, with much sincerity and earnestness, that he never intended to marry, but Maud only laughed at him, and Mr. Warrenne quietly shook his head. However it was settled that they should be as much

as possible with him during the summer: and then Leonard and Maud agreed to set out to the Woodlands; for the Scudamores were not yet apprised of his return, and he longed to see Alice in her new home.

"The Reynolds' are settled at Heathfield by this time," said Maud; "they left the Ferns last week."

"And when is Miss Reynolds to be married?" asked Leonard.

"Some time during the summer."

"A singular match," said Leonard.

"I have never ceased wondering at it," said Maud.

"I trust they will be happy," said Leonard.

"Not the least chance of that," said Maud.

"My dear Maud!" exclaimed Leonard.

"Well, is there?" persisted Maud. "No love on her side, and no esteem on his."

"Have you ever seen them together?" asked Leonard.

"Not since their engagement," said Maud.

"Maud," said Leonard, "what nice rides we will have together. I will get you a beautiful horse, and when you are staying with me we will go out every fine evening; it is so pleasant to ride through the woods in the twilight."

"Oh, how kind! that will be delightful," said Maud; "I have always longed to ride on horseback."

"When you are at home I shall come over to Erlesmede and fetch you," said Leonard; "you will make a desperate rider—you will will have no fear."

"Fear, indeed!" said his sister, laughing.

"Maud," resumed Leonard, after a pause, "I am vexed that we shall not all live together; I have nothing to look to beyond my own family, and however much we may contrive to meet, it is not like being under the same roof."

"And when you marry?" said Maud.

"There, again!" exclaimed Leonard; "you

and my father have both got hold of the same notion."

"Men always marry," said Maud, laughing; "it is only women who remain single."

The Scudamore party were all in the field adjoining the flower garden. Captain Scudamore had just purchased a pair of Shetland ponies for the low carriage that Alice had been heard to wish for, and it had come into her head that she should like to ride one of them. A side-saddle had been procured in haste, a shawl wrapped round her knees, and Captain Scudamore was leading the pony round the field.

Mr. Scudamore, who with Mrs. Thorns and Sir Frederic Manning, were standing by the green gate that led into the garden, received Leonard with much cordiality. Captain Scudamore soon came running by the side of the pony, which was trotting briskly —Alice half-frightened, and half-laughing, with the deepest rose-colour in her cheeks,

and her ringlets tost and scattered in every direction, was lifted from the pony and was soon in her brother's arms.

"She does not look the worse for the air of Woodlands!" said Mrs. Thorns, indicating Alice by pointing at her with her thumb.

"I never saw her look so well," said Leonard.

"And Maud is none of your sickly peaking young ladies," said Mrs. Thorns planting her stud firmly on the ground. "I hate sick people!"

"Sick people are very cross, are not they?" asked Sir Frederic.

"Ah! you will know one day what they are," said Mrs. Thorns, in a warning voice; "when you become a sickly peevish old bachelor, without a soul to take care of you!"

"I know that you will come and nurse me then, Mrs. Thorns," said Sir Frederic.

"I? what impudence! In the first place

I shall be dead by that time," said Mrs. Thorns.

"Then I don't engage you—remember that Mrs. Thorns—don't pay me any visits under those circumstances."

"Ah! do you remember the French Officer, and the Sister of Charity?" said Mrs. Thorns; "that is a fine lesson for young men."

"I am not in want of such lessons, Mrs. Thorns," said Sir Frederic laughing; "but here is young Warrenne Digby ready and willing to be instructed."

"Oh! I know the story," said Leonard; "it is as old as the hills."

"You have a most choice Velasquez at Forrel Court," said Sir Frederic; "a portrait of a nun."

"I would rather have your Ruth than any work of art I ever saw," said Captain Scudamore.

"I adore that Ruth," said Sir Fred-

eric; "I almost beggared myself to purchase it."

"Have you paid for it?" asked Mrs. Thorns.

"Oh yes," said Sir Frederic, "I would never keep an artist waiting for his money—a tailor, or a boot-maker, *à la bonne heure!*"

"Ah! you will never reform, I suppose?" said Mrs. Thorns.

"Miss Warrenne, when will you come and see my Ruth?" said Sir Frederic.

"Now—if you please," said Maud, "it would be a pleasant walk."

"Come along, Mrs. Thorns," said Sir Frederic, offering his arm.

"What, I am to come too?" said Mrs. Thorns, rather gratified to find that with her most eccentric toilet, Sir Frederic was not ashamed to be seen in her company; "well—is the old man going?"

"I have not time," said Mr. Scudamore. "Dick shall go instead."

"And Alice shall ride," said Captain Scudamore, "it is rather a long walk for her."

"You are not at Forrel Court yet?" said Sir Frederic to Leonard.

"No—I go to town to-morrow on business, and then come down to take possession."

"What an agreeable duty!" said Sir Frederic.

"Yes;" replied Leonard, sighing.

"Oh! the business is detestable," said Sir Frederic, interpreting after his own idea, Leonard's sigh; "not that I ever attend to it, but the very sight of a lawyer's table covered with papers, is enough to give one an attack of the blue devils."

"That is right," said Mrs. Thorns, "teach him all your bad ways!"

"Miss Warrenne, are you a good walker?" asked Sir Frederic.

"Yes; but I don't mean to walk any more," said Maud. "Leonard is going to buy me a horse."

"Oh, then I know of one that would just suit you."

"With four black legs I hope, Sir Frederic, and a very long tail, or else I won't condescend to ride him."

"The principal thing is to get a horse that won't stumble when a lady is to ride him," said Sir Frederic.

"I am sorry to differ from you," said Maud, "but when you choose a horse for me, I must beg that you select him for the length of his tail."

"Do you know those ladies, Miss Warrenne?" asked Sir Frederic, as a party of ladies came in sight.

"I know that they are the Stapyltons," said Maud; "yes—we speak."

The Stapyltons were very tall, and very noisy—they were afflicted with harsh voices, and violent spirits, therefore their approach was always heralded by a clatter which was enough as some writer has it, "to bother a rookery."

Mrs. Stapylton thought very justly that with the greater number of men, noise is taken as an earnest of good temper, and therefore she did not attempt to control her daughter's vivacity.

"Two black, and two red," said Sir Frederic, turning suddenly to Leonard, "I give you your choice, which will you have?"

"After you, if you please," said Leonard, smiling.

"I can't afford it," said Sir Frederic, earnestly, "I say so wherever I go—I can't afford to keep the hounds, which I promise you I had much rather do, than keep a wife. You must make up for me Mrs. Stapylton, I don't know whether you are acquainted with my friend Mr. Warrenne Digby?"

"Do I know him?" exclaimed Mrs. Stapylton, advancing with outstretched hand, "Mr. Warrenne is one of the oldest friends I have in the world! His son will be always most welcome at my house. I hope that Lester, and

Mr. Warrenne Digby, (you remember my son Lester, you were at school with him, were not you?) will be extremely intimate. Lester is passionately fond of shooting—you shoot of course, Mr. Warrenne Digby?"

"I am afraid I have no taste for field sports," replied Leonard, a little overpowered by this very warm reception.

"Oh! but you will learn—Lester will be so happy—I am sure, anything in his power."

"You are very good," said Leonard.

"My friend Warrenne Digby is quite a lady's man," said Sir Frederic, coming to his relief, "they never care much for hunting and shooting, you know he is devoted to music and painting."

"An amateur! how delightful! my girls adore the fine arts! But which way are you going? I don't see why we should not join our forces. We are merely out for a ramble."

"Pray do," said Sir Frederic. "We shall have the air of the Canterbury Pilgrims!"

"Ha! ha! capital! Albina, do you hear what Sir Frederic says? They are positively so delighted to meet your sister, Mr. Warrenne Digby, they have no eyes nor ears for any body else! Albina, did you hear that about the Canterbury Pilgrims."

Maud had, in fact, been mobbed by the Stapylton girls during the last few minutes.

"How do you do, Miss Warrenne?"

"How glad we are to have met you!"

"What an age it is since we have seen you out!"

"I suppose you have much more leisure since your sister is married?"

"I hope now that nothing will prevent our meeting *very* often!"

"Do you know Sir Frederic? Is he very often at the Woodlands?"

"How handsome your brother is grown! How glad you must be to have him back again!"

Maud's brain began to reel under this

volley of sentences, uttered quick and sharp as a *feu-de-joie*. She looked proudly towards Leonard, and replied to the last speaker.

"Yes; I think I like him better—so much darker—it makes him look older."

"What a love of a pony!" cried Miss Laura; "I should like to steal it! Let me have a ride, Mrs. Scudamore?"

As she spoke she snatched at the bridle of Alice's Shetland, and pulled as if she would have dragged its head off. Upon which, very properly the pony lifted up its forefeet, and deliberately struck her down.

The sisters screamed—the mother ran forward to help her, and Captain Scudamore picked her up from among the feet of the animal. Strange to say, she had received no injury; she got up, shook the dust from her dress, and relieved the anxious feelings of the society by exclaiming,—"I'm not hurt, and I'm not frightened! and that's more than *you* can say for yourself, Mrs. Scudamore!"

"If she had been worth anything she would have been killed on the spot," said Sir Frederic, in a low tone to Leonard.

"They are all horrible; can't we get away?" said Leonard, looking exceedingly distressed.

"Not for worlds! I have not been so well amused these six months!" said Sir Frederic, laughing. "Mrs. Stapylton between two lords of the manor! What an *embarras de richesse!* Buckstone should write a comedy upon it, and Wright (you know Wright?) should play Mrs. Stapylton! Besides, *mon cher,* though you are polite enough to call the red and black Stapyltons horrible, you should reflect that your sisters are not so at all. *I* have no wish to get away! It is very odd that woman won't take a hint! I have often told her I'm too poor to marry!"

"And therefore she takes you for a *millionaire,*" said Leonard. "Poor people never talk about it."

"I must try something else, then," said Sir Frederic, going up to Alice. "*Ha ça!* Mrs. Scudamore, have you recovered your confidence in Caliban?"

"He was very naughty!" said Alice, stroking the pony's neck. "Do you know, Dick, I think I had rather walk the rest of the way."

"Then let me ride!" exclaimed Miss Laura. "I thought that would be the end of it! Hold the pony, there's a good soul, while I get up on it."

The good soul thus apostrophised, was Sir Frederic, who obediently held the pony until the young lady was seated, and then gave him such a blow with his stick as made the animal start off like an arrow.

Miss Laura, laughing and screaming vociferously, was very soon out of sight.

"Got rid of one of them for the present," said Sir Frederic, turning conplacently to Leonard.

"Thank Heaven!" said Leonard.

"But its too bad to leave your sister to be bored by the other three! What can we do for her? Mrs. Scudamore, I am expending a great deal of pity on your sister; tell her so, for I don't want it to be wasted."

"Maud, come here!" said Alice. "What is the matter, dear, that Sir Frederic pities you?"

"Thank me, Miss Warrenne," said Sir Frederic; "I have given you an excuse for leaving your persecutors!"

"I really do," said Maud, laughing. "I was beginning to grow deaf under it."

"Then take my arm to reward me," said Sir Frederic. "Mrs. Scudamore, come on the other side; let me have the pleasure for once of seeing you parted from your husband."

Alice complied with a smile. Captain Scudamore and Leonard walked on together—Mrs. Thorns was entertaining Mrs. Stapylton with a long history concerning one James

Ashby and Emma Smith, whose names Mrs. Stapylton had never before heard—Sir Frederic was in high spirits, and exerted himself to amuse the sisters—and the Stapylton girls naturally grew out of temper, and complained of being tired.

"Here we are," said Sir Frederic, as they came up to the iron gates. The stone pillars were overgrown with ivy and lichen—but the gates wanted painting; the shrubberies were in disorder—everything announced that it was long since there had been a mistress at the Manor-house. The Stapylton girls rather wondered what was going to happen, and some faint hopes of luncheon began to arise in their minds—they followed in silence up the avenue, and through the hall into the dining room. There, in a small recess, with a curtain half-drawn before it, was the statue of Ruth, gleaning.

Maud took in silence the chair that Sir Frederic placed for her, and feasted her eyes

upon this delightful work of art. Leonard looked, and passed his hand over his forehead, and looked again, and seemed at first more puzzled than pleased.

Miss Albina, after a passing glance at Ruth, had turned to the looking glass. Miss Sarah was taking an inventory of the furniture—Miss Emily was quizzing Mrs. Thorn's old bonnet and York tan gloves.

"These are the worshippers of the fine arts!" said Sir Frederic to Leonard; "the young ladies with whom you will be expected to talk *virtù*!"

"I have certainly seen that before," said Leonard, unable to take his eyes off the statue. "I remember the attitude—even the features; often I have sat watching that uplifted face!"

"Ah! you think so!" said Sir Frederic; "and I have not had it home above three months."

"Could it have been in Gibson's studio at Rome? I was often there."

"No; it is by W———, the prince of sculptors for the female figure."

"I have it!" exclaimed Leonard; "at Mr. Thomason's; the portrait of his daughter; it stood in the window among all the Gardenias and Daphnés. How could you get it?"

"Very easily. I wanted it—I had never seen anything that pleased me so much. I went to Rome; fortunately W—— had not destroyed his clay model; he would have been a fool if he had. He was a friend of mine, and after a little hesitating, he agreed to execute another statue for me. He said it was unusual, to which I acceded; in fact, as I had set my heart upon it was done. But 'faith a good many people might have had the original with less trouble than I took to obtain this delicious counterfeit!"

"I wonder you did not try for the original at once," said Leonard.

"Ah!" said Sir Frederic, and turning

round, he asked Mrs. Thorns if he might offer her some luncheon.

"Luncheon! Not I," returned Mrs. Thorns, standing up suddenly, as if all ready to start; "some people are always ready to stuff and cram at any hour in the day; they won't live to be a hundred, mark that. There is such a thing as digging your grave with your teeth; ask Mr. Warrenne. Now we have seen your image, we will make haste home; it is very pretty, your Virgin Mary!"

The party rose to go. Mrs. Stapylton expressed some anxiety about that dear wild thing Laura; and Captain Scudamore felt some for the dear wild thing Caliban: but at the great gates they were set at ease by the appearance of Miss Laura, leading Caliban by the bridle, her clothes torn, her bonnet crushed, and her face scratched by the brambles; half crying with rage and vexation, and not daring to strike the creature in return, since he knew so well how to use his fore legs.

The pony had run away with her over Forrel common, and had thrown her into a heap of furze and blackberry bushes.

Sir Frederic laughed till he cried, at the spectacle. Leonard struggled to look grave, and Mrs. Thorns frankly told the young lady "it served her right;" for which proof of candour she was not held popular in the Stapylton family.

The next day Leonard went to town, where he remained some weeks. His first care was to secure to Maud the same sum that Mrs. Digby had left to Alice.

Mr. Warrenne was much pleased with the feeling that dictated this action, and in another point of view this circumstance was very welcome to him. His children being now amply provided for, he had no inducement to continue his professional labours—what he had was fully sufficient for his own wants. He therefore made it known, that except to a few old friends who were unwilling to dispense with his ser-

vices, he withdrew entirely from practice. The neighbouring practitioners were then at liberty to carp and wrangle for his patients more openly than they had done while he was attending them.

Leonard came back to Erlesmede as soon as he had finished his business. He seemed to have some extraordinary dislike to entering on his new mode of life. The neighbours were all in a state of excitement and anticipation; but still he lingered at his father's, until Mr. Warrenne fairly told him that he ought to put himself at the head of his own establishment, and go he must.

Very reluctantly then and after many repeated promises from Maud and his father, that they would be much with him during the summer, he took his departure, and established himself at Forrel Court.

But every day he started for Erlesmede as soon as he had breakfasted, and seldom found his way home again till night. Sometimes he

got no further than the Woodlands; but either house he found more attractive than his own home. One would almost have said he *dreaded* being at Forrel.

One evening he found on his return the cards of Mr. Reynolds and Mr. Courtenay.

He almost regretted that he had not been at home when they called; he should have liked to meet Courtenay again; but as for going to Heathfield and returning the visit, that was something that he could not and he would not do!

CHAPTER VI.

My love is strengthened, though more weak in seeming,
I love not less, though less the shew appear.
Shakespere.

The next morning, while Leonard was still loitering over the books with which his breakfast-table was always strewn, Mr. Courtenay walked into the room. He saluted him with precisely the same careless manner that was habitual to him; as if they had seen each other only the day before.

"I forced your doors to-day," said he, "because you reported yourself 'not at home' yesterday."

"I really was at Erlesmede all day," said Leonard.

"Ah!—All your family well?"

"Quite—have you breakfasted?"

"I?—oh yes—Mr. Reynolds is trying to make himself rural—we breakfast at eight."

The name of Reynolds seemed to silence Leonard. He made no reply.

"You know I am staying there, I suppose?" said Courtenay.

"Yes; I took it for granted," replied Leonard.

"You don't congratulate me," said Courtenay.

"You could hardly expect me to do so," returned Leonard.

"Here's a fellow," said Courtenay; "you told me you had no designs in that quarter."

"I told you the truth," returned Leonard.

"I don't wish to comprehend you," remarked Courtenay, "for I am sure you don't comprehend yourself."

"Very likely," said Leonard, in a dejected tone.

"What do you do with yourself all day, Moonshine?" asked Courtenay.

"Oh, I have a quantity of things to do—there are some letters I ought to write; and I promised my steward I would go and look over two small farms that he wants to throw into one;" replied Leonard, looking very much wearied.

"Ay, all that is in the future—some day the letters may possibly be written, and the farms looked over—but what did you do yesterday?"

"I told you—I went yesterday to Erlesmede; and I drove Maud over to the Woodlands, to see the Scudamores.

"Ah!" said Courtenay.

"And when we got there we found that Dick and Alice had gone to Forrel Common, so we followed them."

"Ah!" said Courtenay, as if he expected his friend to proceed.

"Well, we spent the morning looking for wild strawberries."

"I hope you found some?"

"Oh yes—the turf is carpeted with them."

"That was a comfort. Afterwards?"

"We dined at the Woodlands, and I did not get home till the evening.

"And then of course you despatched no end of business?"

"No—for I happened to take up Uhland's Poems, and I read till it was time to go to bed."

"Ah!—and that I suspect is a fair sample of your diary. Every thing put off;—nothing done. I tell you what Moonshine, if you don't wish to be ruined, you must marry directly, a woman with a strong clear head—a complete woman of business. A dreadful style of person to live with, I grant you; but in your case a necessary evil."

"I don't mean to marry," said Leonard.

"I hope then you have announced your

wise intention to all the mothers in the county."

"Of course I have not," replied Leonard.

"You ought," said Courtenay.

"Why, it would look as if I thought,—as if they—"

"Oh, if you are too modest, I will finish for you," said Courtenay,—"as if you thought it better to put them out of their pain at once, and tell them frankly you don't mean to take compassion upon any of them."

"What an idea!" said Leonard.

"Well Moonshine, when do you mean to call upon Mr. Reynolds?" asked Courtenay.

"It was only yesterday that he called;" said Leonard, "I will go to-morrow or the day after."

"Now just think of the number of things you are going to do *to-morrow*," said Courtenay, "and don't add this to the list. Come with me at once."

"It is too early," said Leonard, looking at his watch.

"Not if you go in with me *sans façon*—I am one of the family, you know," said Courtenay, drily.

"I must wait to see that confounded fellow about the farms," said Leonard.

"Put him off once more," said Courtenay; "he is used to it; you know you have done nothing else since you came here."

"I hate to go," said Leonard, hesitating.

"I know you do," replied Courtenay, ringing the bell.

"And, besides, I heard that Miss Reynolds was in bad health," said Leonard.

"That won't prevent her father from seeing you," said Courtenay, with an ironical smile.

The servant came to the door.

"Your master wants his hat and gloves," said Courtenay.

The man looked at Leonard.

"Yes, Nicholls, my hat and gloves," said Leonard, with a sigh.

There were no more excuses to be found. Leonard set off with his friend.

"This is all very fine," said Courtenay, as they walked through the thickly planted wood that led from the house to the gateway. "It takes at least a hundred years to make a house fit to live in. Trees, turf, walls—all want age. You are very well off, Moonshine; you have done very well for yourself."

"If you knew how little I had to do with it," said Leonard, colouring.

"I believe you; I don't take you for a politician," said Courtenay.

"And Miss Reynolds has returned in bad health," said Leonard, looking anxiously at his companion.

"So she seems to think; she generally tells me she has a headache," replied Courtenay.

"And how is she to-day do you think?"

"I have not seen her; she seldom favours us with her company at breakfast."

"Is not her father anxious about her?"

"Not the least in the world. Women always have a headache when they are put out."

"What should put her out?" asked Leonard, gazing earnestly at the impassible face of his friend.

"My dear Moonshine, on that subject I have not the faintest shadow of an idea. I never had a headache myself, and I confess my absolute ignorance respecting the causes and effects of that malady."

Leonard again endeavoured to read his friend's countenance, with the same absolute want of success.

"Here we are," said Courtenay, after they had walked in silence for some time.

"Will you come back with me when we have got over this visit?" asked Leonard, as they entered.

"The very thing I was going to propose," replied Courtenay.

Leonard's agitation as they crossed the hall could not be concealed. He would gladly have stopped the servant in the act of throwing open the door. He heard his name announced, and followed his friend mechanically into a splendid drawing-room. Florence was seated by one of the open glass-doors in an easy chair; she had a book in her hand which, however, she was not reading. She looked the picture of dejection—her figure seemed fallen together—her attitude was bent —her eyes heavy—and her complexion had become pallid—almost yellow.

"How do you do?" said Courtenay, coming up to her and touching her hand.

She put back her hair and looked up—saw Leonard and turned crimson.

He bowed in silence.

"I am much the same, thank you," she replied, sinking back again into her chair.

"I need not introduce Mr. Warrenne Digby to you," remarked Courtenay. "You have not forgotten him, I dare say."

"No," replied Florence, almost inaudibly.

Leonard stood leaning against a marble slab, fixing his eyes, full of mournful interest, upon her. Courtenay threw himself into a chair.

"Shall I drive you out to-day?" he asked.

"No, thank you," said Florence, feebly.

"Are you afraid of the heat?" asked Courtenay, drily.

"Yes," said she, hurriedly, "it is warm to-day."

Courtenay said nothing, but looked at her with his peculiar compression of the brow.

"Perhaps Miss Reynolds would find it—more tolerable—in the evening," said Leonard, taking breath between every few words, and hardly able to articulate.

Courtenay now turned his keen brow upon Leonard.

"Thank you; I am hardly equal to any exertion," she murmured, fixing her eyes on the ground.

"Where are the children, Miss Reynolds?" asked Courtenay.

"I do not know—shall I go for them?" asked Florence, rising hurriedly from her chair.

"By no means—I cannot think of it," said Courtenay, attempting to hand her back to her seat. But Florence, murmuring some inarticulate words, moved to the door, and left the room.

"Good morning!" said Leonard, hastily coming up to Courtenay.

"Eh? Moonshine," returned that gentleman, detaining him by the hand he had offered.

"I cannot stay—I cannot stand it! Let me go at once," exclaimed Leonard, much agitated.

"How very singular," remarked Courtenay, looking calmly at him.

"For Heaven's sake, do not detain me; I cannot bear this!" said Leonard. "You are breaking her heart!"

"I? Thank you! How complimentary; I did not know before that she possessed such an article. Now don't you begin your sky-rocketing, and oblige me by remaining until I go. Here come the children, and their mother. Let me present you to Mrs. Reynolds."

"I thought Florence had come back," said Mrs. Reynolds, looking round. "Where is she?"

"I don't know," said Courtenay, beginning to play with the children. "Beautiful creatures, are they not, Leonard? Which do you like best, Mrs. Reynolds?"

"Oh, for shame. Mamma loves both best," said Mrs. Reynolds, partly to Courtenay, and partly to the children.

"I know which I should like best," said he, carressing them. "I should like Lucy best—better than Edward."

The child was offended. He shook himself free from Mr. Courtenay's hold, and laid down on the floor; his dark eyes half shut, and his golden hair trailing on the carpet.

Courtenay sat watching him in silence.

"You never ask to see baby," said Mrs. Reynolds, with a little laugh. "I am half jealous that you take no notice of baby."

Courtenay did not hear her; he was coaxing Edward into good humour again.

"How fond he is of children," said Mrs. Reynolds, turning to Leonard.

"Very," replied Leonard. "The only thing he *is* fond of," he thought to himself.

"Come, Mrs. Reynolds," said Courtenay, looking up, "there is no reason that you should not give me Edward. I am sure one child is enough for any body; and you will then have two. I think I shall take Edward."

"You must ask Mr. Reynolds," said the lady, smiling. "I think he would be quite as unwilling to part with him as with his own boy."

"I have already asked Mr. Reynolds for one of his children," said Courtenay. "This petition concerns you alone."

Mrs. Reynolds laughed.

"I wonder what you will do with your own children," she said, "since you are so fond of other people's."

"Adore them of course," replied Courtenay, drily.

Mrs. Reynolds looked puzzled. She never had succeeded in making him out.

Miss Reynolds had now returned to the room, and was standing by one of the open windows. She was looking out into the garden, and every now and then she coughed slightly.

Leonard crossing over, moved a low chair close to her. She turned her head, coloured as

deeply as when she first saw him, and sank down into it.

Both quite silent.

Courtenay had risen to go.

"Perhaps," said Mrs. Reynolds, "you can persuade Mr. Warrenne Digby to accompany you when you return to dinner."

Florence's breathless face was now turned towards Leonard. She looked as if her fate depended on his reply.

"You are very good. I regret that I have a previous engagement," said Leonard, hardly able to conceal his agitation.

"But we shall see you, of course, Mr. Courtenay," said Mrs. Reynolds.

"Certainly," replied Courtenay.

Florence, with her head turned towards the window, was stealthily passing her handkerchief over her eyes. She recovered herself by an effort, and turned to receive their adieux. Leonard bowed without seeing anybody. Courtenay smiled at Mrs. Reynolds and the

children; went up to Miss Reynolds and touched her fingers, and then followed his friend out of the room.

"We shall have a warm walk," said Courtenay, as they struck off into the fields. "The blue mist was rising through the trees—the sky was overcast — it was a true summer's day.

No answer from Leonard.

"Don't you think I shall be a very happy man?" asked Courtenay, with his usual dryness.

"You cannot be in earnest! It is impossible that you should mean to persist in such barbarity! She will die! She will never survive her marriage with you! Her heart is not in it!" exclaimed Leonard, with a vehemence that seemed greatly to delight his companion.

"Eh? Moonshine, are we going to have a scene!" he asked.

"Be serious for an instant!" exclaimed Leonard, in great agitation; "tell me that it

is your intention to retract before it is too late; you cannot mean to compel her to fulfil her engagement at the expense of her future life—you will not drag her to the altar!"

"Oh, dear no!" replied Courtenay, quietly. "I assure you I don't meditate any such thing. I would not disarrange her bouquet and her lace veil on any account—she shall walk up at her own time, and her own pace."

"What has she done to you that you should persecute her?" pursued Leonard, now perfectly breathless from agitation; "cannot you see that she is wretched? that she detests you? What happiness can you propose to yourself by such a marriage?"

"Upon my word it is very refreshing," said Courtenay, turning his marble face to his companion; "you are more amusing than ever to-day, Moonshine; what has she done, eh?"

"Yes; what has she done? She can never have wronged you!"

"Has she ever wronged *you?*" asked Mr. Courtenay.

"If she has, I do not care to remember it at this moment," replied Leonard. "I remember nothing but that expression of bitter endurance which will haunt me to the last moment of my life. I never suffered torments to equal those of the last half-hour! To stand by and see her anguish! I—who would die for her!"

"Die for her—that's soon over," said Courtenay, with his accustomed brevity.

Leonard felt in despair. Silent and unconscious, he hurried on, as if he could outstrip his thoughts.

"What a remarkable pace we are keeping up," said Courtenay, taking up off his hat; "somewhere about seven miles an hour."

Leonard slackened his pace.

"Do you think *I* have to bear nothing?" said Courtenay, suddenly. "Do you think

there is not a keener sting in that silent dejection, that all the scorn in the world?"

"But why persist in your suit?" asked Leonard, in the utmost amazement.

"Spoken with your usual wisdom, my dear Moonshine," said Courtenay; "when you have been accepted by a young lady, you will perhaps learn that your suit continues—unless she has expressed a wish to withdraw."

"And that wish?" said Leonard, eagerly.

"She has never expressed," replied Courtenay.

"Yet you see that she is averse to the marriage."

"I see that she is profoundly unhappy; but with a very slender opinion of my own charms, I yet do not see that it follows she is reluctant to fulfil her engagement with me."

"But what can account for her melancholy?"

"Perhaps, like myself, she is deeply attached to another person—and perhaps, unlike

me, she was not born with a propensity to conceal her sentiments. Can you give me some luncheon when we get to your house?"

"*You!*"

"Yes; is there any particular reason why I should leave off eating and drinking? My *fiançée* and her people don't dine before seven —such nonsense in the country — especially when one breakfasts at eight."

"*You*—deeply attached!"

"Oh! perhaps there is a law against *that*, in my case; eh, Moonshine?"

"But I am so astonished!"

"Well—I can't help that. It does not take an earthquake to astonish *you*."

"But you attached, and Miss Reynolds also, what but wretchedness can you expect in your marriage?"

"There you go cantering off with the bit between your teeth! Did I say that Miss Reynolds had a previous attachment? It is a likely way of accounting for her dejection;—

but she detests her present home where she is a cypher, and may have no dislike to exchange it for one where she will be at the head of affairs. This prospect, however, does not diminish her grief, whatever it is—and she is not politic enough to profess any regard for me."

"And you feel none for her;" said Leonard.

"Not a jot!" returned Courtenay, almost fiercely.

A pause ensued, during which Leonard was too agitated to speak. All the reasons which he had meant to urge against the marriage, seemed to have melted away before the matter-of-fact statements of his friend.

"What a fate!" said he at last, "with her beauty, her grace—to give her hand to a man who does not love her."

"The fate of a coquette," returned his friend, "she has outraged all the beauty and the delicacy of love—she has her reward!"

This being rather in the form of a sentiment, surprised Leonard as coming from Mr. Courtenay.

"Still," said he, looking bewildered, "though I begin to understand *her* reasons for not opposing the marriage,—"

"You can't make out mine—don't puzzle yourself—I'll tell you. I want a home—my father is always boreing me to marry—I admire Miss Reynolds;—and moreover I once threatened to make her accept me, if she ever tried to attract me. There is some triumph in that. Recollect O'Neill. Take my advice and do the same. Marry your hard-headed woman."

"Never," said Leonard. "But I cannot get over the idea of your being so much attached. You who always laugh at such things in other people."

"Should I laugh at such things the less because I am subject to them? On my word, I can imagine nothing more absurd than my

present conduct. I marry a woman for whom I have no sort of regard, to satisfy my father, and to stop the mouths of a couple of maiden aunts who write to me every fortnight, and entreat me to consider that I am the last descendant of the Courtenays. And I should have held it a kind of infidelity to the person to whom I am attached, if I had selected a woman whom I could by possibility have become fond of. Very ridiculous all that."

"We are going out of our way," said Leonard, looking round, "there is the Roman Arch."

"It is not far—let us walk there," said Courtenay, hastening in that direction. "This is a view I am particularly fond of—look—you get the water and the trees, and a bit of your house in the distance. I wish you would sketch it for me—I can't sketch, and I always wished for this view. Do it to-morrow."

"Well, I will—it would make a good picture," said Leonard. "Shall we go on now?"

Courtenay remained standing under the arch with his arms folded, looking on the ground and smiling as if he recollected something.

"I wonder how long it is since I was here," he said at last. "It must be two years I should think."

"Well, are we going on?" asked Leonard, after they had stood for some moments silent.

"By all means," said Courtenay; "we both seem planet struck to-day I think."

When they arrived at Forrel Court, they found Maud in the library, standing reading at the shelves.

"Ah! Maud!" said Leonard, hastening up to her, "how did you get over?"

"Papa dropped me," returned Maud, "he is gone a little farther to call on an old patient. He will pick me up as he comes back."

"Have you seen Mr. Courtenay?" said Leonard, moving aside.

Maud coloured beautifully—Courtenay advanced to her.

"Why don't you come and keep your brother's house?" said he, "such an old bachelor as he is."

"Oh! Mr. Courtenay," said Maud gaily, "I am a very valuable person—I cannot be spared to keep Leonard's house—he must find somebody else to do it."

"It is very hard that you and my father don't live here," said Leonard, "it is absurd to keep up two houses—it answers no purpose."

'Since there are not two Miss Warrennes," said Courtenay, turning to Maud.

"And it is so very hard, and so very unreasonable," said Maud, "not to give him credit for having made up his mind at twenty-two, to remain single for ever and ever!"

"And as soon as you had fairly got rid of your other house, and settled in this," said

Courtenay, "he would be sure to meet the very person who alone would have power to shake his resolution."

"Exactly," replied Maud, laughing. "Don't look so vexed, Leonard, dear, and please give me some luncheon."

"The very thing I have been asking for, Miss Warrenne; but he would not listen to me!"

"I suppose it is ready in the dining-room," said Leonard.

Courtenay offered his arm to Maud.

"How is Miss Reynolds?" asked Maud, as they took their places at the table; "Mrs. Creswick told me she had returned in bad health."

"Yes; she seems to have a cough," said Courtenay. "Why is it you never come to see her?"

"Because my acquaintance was really with the Creswicks, and not with her. I only knew her as belonging to that house."

"I don't think she is popular with women," said Courtenay, coolly.

"No," replied Maud, with a gay laugh; "she is far too handsome!"

"Very much gone off lately, don't you think, Leonard?" said Courtenay, cutting a piece of bread as he spoke.

Maud looked at him with the most unbounded astonishment that could be put into a face. Leonard only sighed. Courtenay gave Maud one of his keen looks, but took no notice of her expression.

He could not fail to perceive that she had gained in beauty since he saw her last. The outline of her beautiful features, sharpened more delicately — her expression even more joyous—more animated—her complexion more brilliant—her silken hair more abundant. She was so perfectly happy. Happy to see Alice so delightfully married; happy in Leonard's good fortune; happy to be so absolutely essential to her father every hour. When in repose

it seemed as if no cloud could ever have passed over her serene brow, when animated, nothing could be imagined so joyous as the sudden kindling of her whole countenance.

"Still a water-drinker," said Leonard, as Courtenay filled his glass.

"Constant; you see, I am so excitable I dare not drink wine."

Maud broke again into a merry laugh.

"You don't believe me, Miss Warrenne—you always had a bad opinion of me."

"No," said Maud; "I don't like some of your ways; but I cannot fail to have a high opinion of you in general—I used once to hate you amazingly."

"I know; that evening at the Creswicks."

"Oh! all that time when you behaved badly to Leonard."

She wished it unsaid, when it was too late. He turned quickly round and gazed at her with an earnestness that brought the colour to her face; then rising he said to Leonard,—

"Don't forget to do that view for me. I must have it."

"No; Maud shall sketch it," said Leonard. "I never like the bore of doing the outline."

"What view?" said Maud.

"The Roman arch," replied Courtenay.

Maud felt a kind of uneasiness that she tried to shake off.

"You must exert yourself," she said to Leonard.

"I am going home directly, you know."

"No; stay till Sunday, and I will drive you back after church," said Leonard.

"Do," said Courtenay.

"I dare say, Mr. Courtenay," said Maud, with another laugh; "I will stay for Leonard; but really you should not try *now,* to exert your influence over ladies. You can't think how persuasive you looked!"

Courtenay wrung her hand.

"What an odd person your friend is, Leonard, dear," said Maud, still laughing; "he

has almost crushed my fingers. Will you come and see if there is a bit of azalia left upon the lawn?"

CHAPTER VII.

Julia.—Find me some way to 'scape these Nuptials. Do it!
Some opening for avoidance or escape.
Or to thy charge I'll lay a broken heart.
It may be broken vows, or blasted honour;
Or else a mind distraught.

The Hunchback.

Until the children were sent to bed of an evening at Heathfield, Mr. Courtenay found plenty of occupation in teazing them or playing with them. He was a great favourite with Mrs. Reynolds, because it was easy to see that his interest for them was not put on; but that really he had much more pleasure in talking to them than to any one else in the house. It was a never-failing source of interest to him, to

watch what they would do, or to ask them all sorts of odd questions to see what they would say.

And when they were gone to bed and that occupation was withdrawn from him, Mr. Reynolds was quite satisfied with the degree of attention he paid to Florence, which consisted in once or twice coming up to her embroidery frame and remarking on the small progress she had made.

"You would never gain a living, Miss Reynolds, by embroidering; I don't remember the beginning of that cluster of violets, and I can hardly look forward to the end;—I think you have accomplished half that leaf since I have been at Heathfield."

"No;" said Florence, in a smothered tone, "I am very helpless, I fear."

"It is fortunate," said her father, "for you and for many other young ladies, that you have no necessity for exertion."

"I think," said Florence," looking up with

more animation than she usually displayed; I think I could be a governess."

"Oh!" my dear Florence," cried Mrs. Reynolds from the depths of her arm-chair, "that would be worse than anything. I think, do you know, that *I* should prefer being a lady's-maid in a house where there were no girls. I fancy I could manage *one* mistress perfectly well. Don't you think, Mr. Courtenay, that would be a very easy life?"

"Pardon me," replied Courtenay; "I have a very slight experience of the sex; but I should think that to study the caprices of any one lady a sufficiently arduous task."

Mr. Reynolds laughed harshly; Florence looked timidly from her father to her lover as if she asked herself which was the sternest; but meeting the keen glance of Courtenay fixed upon her, she bent down her head, and searched among the silks in her basket.

"What a remarkably handsome young man Mr. Warrenne Digby is," said Mrs. Reynolds;

I was so pleased with him: he called on you to-day, my dear."

"I wish I had been at home," said Mr. Reynolds.

He has the most splendid eyes!" said Mrs. Reynolds; and he comes into a room so well. Isn't he delightful, Mr. Courtenay? Your pretty cousin was right when she called him romantic. I was thinking this morning how nicely he would do for Ada."

"So I think," said Courtenay.

Florence shivered.

I wish Lucy were old enough; I would certainly try and catch him for her," said Mrs. Reynolds.

"You would do very wisely," replied Mr. Courtenay.

Mr. Reynolds, who was walking up and down the room, laughed, and stopped opposite to his wife's chair.

"What! are you beginning already?" said he.

"Yes; I don't conceal it," said she; it is the duty of every mother:—Lucy is seven, and Mr. Warrenne Digby is"—

"Twenty-two," interposed Mr. Courtenay.

"Why, there you see, one often hears of much greater disparity than that!" exclaimed Mrs. Reynolds. I am sure in India twenty years is a very common difference; and here is but fifteen."

"I shall tell him," said Courtenay, joining in the laugh.

"Why did not you ask him to dinner?" asked Mr. Reynolds.

"I did."

"And was he engaged?"

"He said so; but I don't know whether it was merely an excuse."

"No; his sister was there when he returned; I dare say he expected her," said Courtenay.

"His sister! delightful! I will have her to stay here," exclaimed Mrs. Reynolds.

"She is only with him till Sunday," said Mr. Courtenay.

"Then she had better come on to us. I will go over to-morrow and settle it with her," said Mrs. Reynolds.

"Fancy that little blind thing being married," said Courtenay.

"What a chance! how thankful she ought to be," said Mrs. Reynolds.

"We have all of us much to be thankful for," remarked Mr. Reynolds, glancing at his daughter's dispirited countenance.

"That we have, indeed!" said Mrs. Reynolds, arranging her emerald bracelet.

"Did you ride to-day?" said Mr. Reynolds, pausing as he passed his daughter in his walk.

"No."

"Nor walk?"

"No—I—"

"It is important to take exercise," said Mr. Reynolds; "you are now in the country—you have a horse at your command—I should be

glad to see you a little more active in your habits."

"Florence is not strong," interposed Mrs. Reynolds; "trust her for shewing off her pretty chesnut as soon as she feels able. If I were you, Florence, dear, I should wish them all good-night; papa is cross this evening."

Nothing Mrs. Reynolds could say ever offended her husband. He stood smiling down upon her; while Courtenay lighted a candle for his *fiancée,* and quietly opened the door for her exit.

"Mrs. Reynolds now and then felt some anxiety about the reality of Courtenay's regard for Florence. She had sufficient kindness of feeling to let this thought disturb her sometimes; but she consoled herself by remembering that young ladies *must* marry, and that this match presented an unusual number of advantages. On the only occasion upon which she had hinted her suspicions to Mr. Reynolds, he had replied, with as much harshness as he ever

permitted himself to use to her—He was too contented to find any one willing to claim the hand of Florence, after the character she had managed to fasten upon herself, to admit of his being very fastidious respecting the degree of enthusiasm she might awaken. From all he knew of Mr. Courtenay he should feel pride in calling him his son-in-law, and nothing would cause him so much displeasure as any shew of reluctance on the part of his daughter. Mrs. Reynolds was quite silenced.

It was always an awful time for Florence after breakfast, when the ladies went into Mrs. Reynolds' morning-room where Courtenay sat with his book and Florence with her work-frame, and Mrs. Reynolds went off to meet her housekeeper, and play with her children, and try on all the new dresses that were being "built," as Courtenay called it, under her inspection.

"And Florence, with her father's injunctions still ringing in her ears, dared not be

uncivil, but sat ready to look up and reply whenever Courtenay should please to speak—and she became so nervous while waiting for the sound of his voice that she always started when he began, which, as he remarked to himself, was "highly gratifying."

On this morning there was a silence of some minutes, while Courtenay followed the pattern of the carpet with a slender mahl-stick that he had taken from an easel near. At last he came out of his reverie—

"Is this your property, Miss Reynolds?"

"No—oh, yes! I believe that one is; Mrs. Reynolds borrowed it of me the other day."

"Do you ever paint now?"

"Never."

"You don't sing either, do you?"

"No, I have not for some time."

"I presume that you do not love music?"

"I used to like it; but I never sang well."

It was certainly very strange to hear

Florence make such a confession. Courtenay regarded her with much curiosity.

"Did you ever hear the youngest Miss Warrenne, Mrs. Scudamore, sing?"

"Sometimes; but I very seldom saw Alice—she rarely went out."

"True; will you ride this morning?"

"I think—I—had rather not."

"What will you like to do?"

"I believe I should like to do nothing; but I do not know whether——"

"Whether it is best for you. Let me advise you to drive out; there is nothing very fatuiging in sitting in a carriage."

"Yes, I will take your advice," said Florence.

"I wonder whether all this obedience is meant to last," thought Courtenay.

"Well, then, shall I order the pony-carriage after luncheon?" he asked.

"If you please."

After this the lovers found nothing to say

to each other for a long time. Florence sorted the colours of her silks; Courtenay drew all the roses within his reach on the carpet.

"Miss Reynolds," said Courtenay at last, suddenly approaching his chair nearer to her's.

He made a pause that frightened her. She laid down her work, and looked at him.

"Miss Reynolds, when will you do me the honour to name a day for our marriage?"

She stretched out her hands with the look of terror that he had once or twice seen in Alice Scudamore.

"I entreat you—give me—a little—time," she faltered—trembling from head to foot. Then as fast as she could, she added—

"Only, if it interferes with your arrangements. I do not know what your engagements may be—I mean if it does not inconvenience you greatly—to wait——"

"Miss Reynolds," said Courtenay, with more gravity than was habitual to him. "I can have no arrangements at the present time

that are not subservient to your wishes. I should be sorry to hasten your movements, or to occasion you any uneasiness. But I leave you to judge the sort of impression your father will have of my respect for yourself and his alliance if I constantly agree to defer the period of our union."

"Oh, Mr. Courtenay," said Florence, gazing into his face, with an expression of wild anxiety, "I know nothing of you."

"It is true, Miss Reynolds," said Courtenay, still gravely, and without any expression of irony; "but allow me to ask if it is my fault? Have you ever invited my confidence? Have you ever allowed me to seek to be on more intimate terms with you? At any rate, I have attempted no concealment, and it is possible that what you do know of me may be my worst side."

"You re-assure me; you give me some courage," said Florence; "you lead me to hope something from your generosity."

She paused as if to take a strong resolution, and then added, "In this engagement I am influenced by fear alone."

"Is this true?" exclaimed Courtenay, bending forward, and looking her through.

"When you made proposals to me through my father," said Florence, becoming crimson, "he informed me that if I refused to accept them, I should not receive the shelter of his roof—nay, if by any conduct of mine subsequently, you were induced to break with me, he would withdraw his protection from me. Have some compassion on me, Mr. Courtenay. Think for me!"

"And this is the simple truth?" said Courtenay.

"It is indeed!" said Florence, and covering her face, she burst into a passion of tears, more impetuous, more hysterical in fact, than anything he had ever seen.

Now, though he often said it was one of his peculiarities to be not in the slightest degree

affected by a woman's tears, there were few things which made him so exceedingly wretched. He was overcome directly.

"Miss Reynolds," he began; "Florence! let me entreat you to compose yourself. You ask me to think for you. How *can* I think, when—it's very odd—when you actually agitate me by your distress.

But it was some time before she could compose herself; her nerves were shaken, and her health weak; and as she was not in the habit of giving way to tears, the paroxysm was all the stronger when it did come.

"And now listen," said Courtenay; "try to think dispassionately of your situation. Suppose I withdraw my suit, what will be your condition? On my word, I don't see how that will mend matters for you. Mr. Reynolds will be as much displeased as if the withdrawal came from your side. That is, if I understand you."

"It is true, What am I to do?" said Flo-

rence. She looked the very picture of helpless distress.

"Why, Miss Reynolds," said Courtenay, leaning foward and speaking in his usual manner again; "I am aware that it is rather an awkward alternative to propose to you; but I really don't see what other move is open—your father has check-mated you. I am afraid you must marry me."

"Oh! don't, for Heaven's sake! have more regard to yourself—more pride—than to seek a wife who has no heart to bestow! if all I hear of you be just you deserve some affection!" exclaimed Florence, in the extremest agitation.

"You flatter me. I don't seem very likely to come by any at present," said Courtenay, smiling. "But may I enquire what are your especial objections to the marriage?"

"Have I not told you? Must I repeat it? I love another," said Florence, struggling with her tears.

Courtenay shook his head with a slight smile.

"You do not believe me!" exclaimed Florence; "you cannot credit that I have loved this person for years—that I shall never cease to do so—that I little knew how much, until my fate was fixed! Mr. Courtenay, have compassion upon me! With you all this is the occupation of an hour—with me the misery of a life!"

"What a very dramatic position we are placed in!" said Courtenay, smiling. "But now consider. It is very romantic and pretty to talk of marrying one's first love—but it is not done. Then comes a marriage of convenience—such as ours. You will always be assured of my respect—you will have a large fortune—just turn it over in your mind."

"I cannot! I cannot! Do you not see that it is a crime!" exclaimed Florence.

Courtenay was struck with astonishment. It was so. There was no disputing the fact.

And this girl whom he had despised, and considered as inferior in every way, had a more punctilious sense of duty than himself.

"You are quite right, Miss Reynolds—it must be prevented," said Courtenay, rising.

"But how? Just think of my father?"

"He must hear reason, like other people—shall I speak to him, or will you?"

"I? oh! I should die of terror!"

"Dear me! And what if Mr. Reynolds should be unwilling to let you off?" asked Courtenay preparing to leave the room.

"Oh! Mr. Courtenay, come back! It will not do! All my father's anger would fall on me! I dare not venture it."

"But, my dear Miss Reynolds, in what way will it be possible for me to oblige you, if not in this?" said Courtenay, resuming his seat by her side. "If neither *you* nor *I* withdraw, it appears to me very probable that the marriage will take place."

"Oh! Mr. Courtenay, don't say so!" exclaimed Florence, with another burst of tears.

Courtenay twisted about the mahlstick in silence—Florence had recourse to her salts.

"Really, Miss Reynolds, I have every inclination to serve you," said he; "but I can't quite see my way—suppose I talk it over with Mrs. Reynolds?"

"Oh! do—go directly—thank you, a thousand times!"

Courtenay hastened into the garden, where at that hour Mrs. Reynolds was pretty sure to be found. Florence waited in suspense until his return.

He came back in about a quarter of an hour; sat down in the same chair that he had before occupied, and took her hand with an air of sympathy very unusual to him.

"I assure you, Miss Reynolds, it won't do," he said. "Mrs. Reynolds gives you no hopes. She says Mr. Reynolds is more firmly fixed upon this subject than she could have

imagined. I am very sorry for you. I would abscond if I could do so without losing my character. I wish you would try and reconcile yourself to the business? I like you better than I ever thought I should."

"You won't hurry me then, Mr. Courtenay?" said Florence.

He did not quite understand the expression of her face but he replied hastily,—

"Not for worlds! And now let me drive you out—it will do you good, after all this excitement."

CHAPTER VIII.

Val.—I will betray his grief: he loves a gentlewoman,
A friend of yours, whose heart another holds.
He knows it too—yet such a sway blind fancy
And his not daring to deliver it
Have won upon him that they must undo him:
Never so hopeful and so sweet a spirit
Misfortune fell so foul on.

Beaumont and Fletcher.

"Now, Mr. Courteney," said Florence, as soon as they were on the high-road, "I believe I fear those walls; I never dare speak under that roof — don't you think I could be a governess?"

Mr. Courtenay looked at her in surprise. What is she up to now, thought he. It would

take two life times to made out any one woman, I believe.

"Tell me," said Florence, "because you are the only friend I have. Ah! Mr. Courtenay, you ought to thank me. I do not believe there is a man so cold as to be insensible to the happiness of obtaining a woman's undivided heart—a heart that has known no other impression. Surely this is not so much a matter of romance as of plain sense. I can admit a woman to be a very valuable possession—but surely she is enhanced by being entirely your own—her past and her future equally devoted to one object!"

"Miss Reynolds, you are as much a coquette as ever," said Courtenay; "you are determined that I should prize you most in losing you."

"Oh! no Mr. Courtenay; I wish you a happier fate; but tell me how people set about these thing—people in real want—how do they get a situation?"

"My dear Miss Reynolds, there is no likelihood of your being reduced to such a strait. Mr. Reynolds may perhaps be very angry, but he will never make good his threat. I only wait your commands to speak to him—I will try to reduce him to terms."

"Ah! you do not know my father!"

"Very few men are a mystery, I assure you, Miss Reynolds—shall I attack him after dinner?"

"No—wait—let us wait a few days; we do not know what may happen."

"Whenever you please," said Courtenay. "Where do you wish to go?"

"All places are alike to me," said Florence.

"Then, as I have a choice, I will turn off here," said Courtenay. "I made young Warrenne promise to draw me a sketch hereabouts. I shall see if he has forgotten all about it."

Florence made no reply. They were driving in the direction of the Roman arch.

As they leisurely ascended the hill, they

came in sight of Leonard, who was seated on a fragment of the old wall drawing, with Maud half-kneeling by his side, looking over his work. Courtenay stopped the carriage at the top of the hill and got out.

"I vote that we make a halt here," said he, offering his hand to Florence to alight; "the ponies will stand."

Leonard took off his hat and came towards them, leaving his drawing in the hands of Maud.

Florence, in her agitation, replied to his salutation by a bow, so slight and hurried that it was hardly perceptible. Leonard felt her apparent coldness, and did not attempt to address her.

"Can you find Miss Reynolds a seat?" said Courtenay, "without deranging you," he added to Maud, who rose when they came close to her.

Maud spread a thick plaid upon the ruined wall, and invited Miss Reynolds to take her seat on it.

"It is not really damp, except for delicate people," she said; "but I am afraid that at present you must be classed among the invalids."

"You are very kind, Miss Warrenne," said Florence, sinking down. "I am not very strong just now."

Maud, surprised at the gentleness of her manner, glanced earnestly at her face—she was shocked to see how ill she looked. In fact, the scene of the morning had done Florence no good—instead of exerting herself, she ought to have been on the sofa. Of the whole party Maud was the only one who felt at ease—Florence was overcome, Leonard was wretched, and Courtenay, though he would not have confessed it to himself, felt some embarrassment at finding himself again in Maud's society.

"Let's see the drawing," said Courtenay.

Leonard handed it to him.

"Capital!" said Courtenay. "Had you any hand in this, Miss Warrenne?"

"No, indeed," said Maud. "I don't encourage his ildeness. I would not do a stroke for him."

"You once took a sketch of this arch," said he.

"Yes—ages ago," said Maud, laughing a little as she remembered the scene.

"Go on," said Courtenay, pointing to the sketch.

Leonard took up his pencil.

"Don't make that too green," said Maud, seated close to Leonard.

Florence remained drooping and silent. Her little teazing cough was more troublesome than usual.

"I am quite distressed to hear you cough so much," said Maud.

"Thank you; it is not of any real consequence," said Florence, gently.

"Worrying," remarked Courtenay.

"Just that," replied Florence, with a smile.

Maud looked as if she thought them the very strangest lovers she had ever heard of.

Leonard seemed on the point of speaking, but did not.

"I cannot go on Maud; do you," he said presently; "my hand shakes."

"It is the heat," said Maud. "You can finish it at home. You have got in all your effects."

"You are determined not to put your hand to it, I see that," said Courtenay in a low tone to Maud.

She looked up at him, but she could not help colouring; so she rose, and began to collect together all Leonard's drawing materials.

"I do dislike people who fancy themselves so very penetrating," she said as if to herself, but quite loud enough for Courtenay to hear. He laughed.

"I'll tell you where you sat," said Courtenay; "a little higher up—just here."

"So I did," said Maud, moving a few steps forward; "I remember that angle of Forrel Court."

"How little you then thought it would be your brother's," said Courtenay.

"I can hardly believe it now," said Maud.

"Who lives in that red brick house, out towards Erlesmede?" asked Courtenay.

"The Stapylton's; don't you know them?"

"I may have seen them. Any daughters?"

"Four."

"Handsome?"

"I don't know at all;—are they handsome, Leonard?"

"I had rather have your opinion," said Courtenay; "not that I have a choice in the present case, for Moonshine there does not hear a word we are saying."

Leonard, not being able to muster courage to address Miss Reynolds, was gathering the beautiful little blossoms of the cistus, which grew in profusion on the bank.

"You will see them I hope when they come to Leonard's ball;" said Maud.

"Is he going to give a ball?" asked Courtenay, laughing.

"Mrs. Stapylton has insisted on it," returned Maud.

"And of dancing with her four daughters?"

"Of course."

"Well, poor woman, she is only doing her duty, as Mrs. Reynolds says; and hard duty it must be, where there are four to be got rid of."

"What a hateful idea!" exclaimed Maud, angrily.

"And quite unheard of in the present century," said Courtenay.

"If it is the truth, you have no business to think it," said Maud.

"You can't defend that position," said Courtenay. "Truth before everything."

Maud shut the case with an angry snap. Courtenay helped her to tie the portfolio.

"Well, but you will dance with me at this ball, will you not?" said Courtenay.

"With a great deal of pleasure," returned Maud.

"Once upon a time you would not," said Courtenay.

"I know," replied Maud.

"You have forgiven me, then," said Courtenay.

"I have had time enough to do so, at any rate," said Maud, laughing.

"I forget what I had done," said Courtenay

"I am sure, so do I," replied Maud.

"Then it is agreed, said Courtenay.

"Certainly."

"The first quadrille?"

"No, the second."

"Are you engaged for the first?"

"No."

"Then, I claim it!"

"And I tell you the second."

"But since you are not engaged——"

"I intend to dance the first with another person.

"Do you mean to ask him then?"

"I do."

"Now, that's not likely," said Courtenay.

"You will see," returned Maud.

"I won't give up that first quadrille!" persisted Courtenay.

"Are we not like two children?" said Maud, laughing, "to quarrel about a quadrille, when the ball is not likely ever to take place."

"It *shall* take place, now," said Courtenay; "I have an interest in it."

"Leonard will not be persuaded," said Maud.

Courtenay only smiled.

"I'll tell you all that really passed," said Maud. "We were dining at Colonel Creswick's; Mrs. Stapylton said to Leonard—'You actually must give a ball, my dear Mr. Warrenne Digby. It would be a sin if you did not, when you have such a splendid room for

the purpose.' You know that immense north drawing-room, which always freezes me to look at."

"And she felt like a mother to him, did not she add?"

"Yes; she gave him to understand that she felt a mother's interest in his concerns."

"How kind! Come, the first quadrille.

"I'll tell you what, I'll compromise the matter."

"No; I will not have a compromise."

"Mr. Courtenay, you are without exception the most obstinate person; and I only wonder"—

She glanced at Florence, and stopped.

"You only wonder!—Come, finish."

"Whether it is going to rain—look towards the south, Leonard."

Like all places within a few miles of the sea, they were liable to sudden showers and sea fogs. A mass of black clouds was drifting towards them.

"*Le cher ami*; he has been botanising;—anything new in the vegetable world?" asked Courtenay, approaching Leonard with an ironical smile.

"We shall have a heavy storm," said Leonard, starting up, Good Heaven! you must make haste and get under shelter—you will be wet through."

"Thank you, I don't much mind it," said Courtenay; affecting to consider that Leonard's anxiety was entirely on his account.

"*You!* Where are your feelings?" said Maud, looking at him indignantly.

"At my banker's," said he quietly.

Maud hastened to wrap Florence in the large plaid.

"You must not get wet with that cough," said Maud; "this will protect you completely, if that man will only make haste."

"I shall make all sail to Forrel Court," said Courtenay; "that is by far the nearest house."

"Oh! don't," whispered Florence, looking at him imploringly.

"You must not get wet," said Courtenay; "I could not allow it. Forrel Court is only half a mile off; and it is beginning to rain already."

"We will follow you," said Leonard.

"But we can take Miss Warrenne," said Courtenay.

"No;" said Maud, drawing back.

"Oh! do," said Florence; "see there is plenty of room."

Leonard handed her in—the carriage dashed away: he set off to walk home through the fields.

Are you frightened, Miss Warrenne?" asked Courtenay, who was driving down hill at a tremendous pace.

"Not the least; you could not frighten me!" said Maud.

"Yes; if I were to overturn you," said Courtenay.

"I defy you to do it," said Maud; "you

could not overturn me without overturning Miss Reynolds."

The expression of Mr. Courtenay's face seemed to say *that* would be no particular objection.

"Oh! I never hated anybody so much in my life," cried Maud, who quick as lightning had read his expression; and who sometimes unguardedly said what she felt—and was sorry for it the moment afterwards.

"Do you hear that, Miss Reynolds?" said Courtenay.

Florence smiled: she knew Maud had disliked Mr. Courtenay when they met at Erlesmede.

The rain came down heavily, and Maud's muslin dress was soon wet through. Florence wished to share the plaid with her, but she steadily refused it.

"It will save one, but it will be of no use for two," said she; "and I don't care for the rain —in that respect I resemble Mr. Courtenay."

"Do you never take cold?" said Courtenay.

"Very seldom."

"There is another point of resemblance," said Courtenay.

"Don't find any more, please!" said Maud earnestly.

Florence could not help laughing at her manner.

"Now leave me to do the honours," said Courtenay, as he drew up before the door, and handed out the ladies; "you ought to change your dress directly.

"Light a fire in the drawing-room," said Maud to the servant who was taking the wet plaid; and get some hot wine and water at once. I shall be down in one minute," she added, turning to Courtenay; "I would not trust you to take care of any one."

She came back just as the wine and water was ready, and the fire blazing up.

Florence had not entirely escaped; her

bonnet had got very wet, and her long ringlets hung damp and uncurled round her face. She looked wretchedly ill—almost blue with cold, and her beautiful acquiline nose "as sharp as a pen."

Maud on the contrary, seemed refreshed by the shower—her colour was heightened, and her smooth bands of hair did not suffer from the wet. Mr. Courtenay glanced from one to the other with an expression that she could not venture to make out—it almost seemed as if he was drawing a comparison in her favour, yet that she thought, could not be. One thing was quite clear to her that he behaved to her now, just as he had done when they had met before his engagement, and when he had acted so strangely, particularly in his last interview, that she had almost fancied if she had encouraged him, he would have made her a declaration. But his present conduct proved her mistake—he must have had some strange fancy for her good opinion, she supposed—and as she

recalled that scene which had often since been present to her thoughts, she blushed a little at her inexperience which had led her so to mistake his intention. She had read in books of ladies who had anticipated an offer when none was intended to be made—and she remembered with thankfulness, that however awkwardly she might have conducted herself, she had said nothing which might lead him to think she had come to such a conclusion. She now watched his manner to Florence with some curiosity. He gave her some negus, and told her to drink plenty of it if she wished to escape a bad cold —he then offered his services to Maud which she rejected—after which he threw himself into an arm chair and took up the paper.

Leonard now joined them—he was perfectly attentive as master of the house—rang to hasten the luncheon—mended the fire—and enquired with exactly a proper degree of interest after Miss Reynolds.

It was awkward meeting her in his own

house—the home that if she had once acted differently, he would have felt so much pleasure in offering to her. A home too that would have satisfied the most fastidious woman. If she had but felt with him—if she could but have had patience—things would now perhaps be different. He tried to feel that she was not worthy of him—he made an effort to throw off the dejection which he felt in her presence.

"Well, what tidings from the *Allgemaine Zeitung?*" he asked, seeing Courtenay poring over the German paper.

"I was reading an account of a concert at Dresden, at which our old acquaintance, Mademoiselle Moor assisted," said Courtenay, throwing down the paper.

"She is a fine singer," said Leonard.

"Ah! do you remember that evening when we saw her in *Norma?*" asked Courtenay.

"That evening—yes," said Leonard, and he shuddered.

Florence blushed crimson, and Courtenay

recollecting the fatal circumstance attached to that representation remained silent, leaning his head on his hand.

"Still raining!" said Maud, turning to look out of the window, as she passed on to a little ebony work table which was evidently reserved for her use.

Courtenay rose and followed her.

Some books, and brilliant looking German wools were lying heaped together.

"What are these for?" he asked, lifting up a heap of skeins.

"I am making some new kind of mats," replied Maud, "to see whether they would be worth teaching to Alice."

"And what have you got here?" said Courtenay, taking up a book—"Goëthe's Faust?"

"Yes; Leonard was reading me 'Marlow's Faust' yesterday evening—just to show me the difference."

"And what did you think of it?"

"That it was just so rude a beginning as

would encourage a great poet to take up the idea and work it out properly—it was too good a subject to be left in the hands of Marlow."

"Marlow has some very fine lines here and there," remarked Courtenay.

"Now that reminds me of men when they admire a woman," said Maud; "her forehead is good—or the tip of her finger, or the end of her nose! What does that matter, if the *ensemble* is bad!"

Courtenay laughed.

"Is that a good piano?" he asked.

"Yes—the sweetest tone in the world."

"Perhaps, as there does not seem much conversation going on," said Courtenay, glancing at Leonard and Florence, who were seated silently at opposite sides of the fire, "you will let me hear it."

"To be sure" said Maud. She sat down and played a waltz.

"Ah! that reminds me." said Courtenay;

'let us have something definitely settled about the ball."

"Yes—let us!" said Maud, starting up.

"Come, I shall have a coadjutor in you at last," said Courtenay.

"That you may depend upon," said Maud, laughing; "on every subject that I particularly desire myself."

"We were talking of the ball you are going to give here, Moonshine," said Courtenay, coming up to Leonard.

Leonard turned round all astonishment.

"Yes, dear" said Maud; "it appears that it is the duty of every enlightened young man, to give a ball to his neighbours now and then; especially when he has a drawing room eighty feet long."

"Particularly when he refuses to marry any of the young ladies about," added Courtenay; "he owes them that slight compensation."

Florence glanced hastily at him, as Cour-

tenay spoke—and turned away as quickly. She saw that his eyes were fixed upon her.

"If anybody would take the trouble off my hands," said Leonard.

"What say you, Miss Warrenne?" asked Courtenay.

"I will, if you will," said Maud, laughing.

"Done!" said Courtenay.

"Not that I know in the least what to do!" said Maud, still laughing.

"We shall make it out between us," said Courtenay; "but you had better put up a placard on his chimney-piece, to signify to him that he is to give a ball on such a day, or he will forget all about it and ramble off to Sweden or New Zealand."

"I shall remind him," said Maud; "it will be very amusing."

"And be sure to ask the Stapyltons!" said Courtenay.

"All four," replied Maud; "I would not

leave out one. Leonard shall waltz with the first, galop with the second—"

"Why you don't mean to make me dance," said Leonard.

"Your sister wishes you to stand for the county, and this is a preliminary," said Courtenay, drily; "you are expected to dance with every woman in the room."

"No, I have no ambition to see him in Parliament," said Maud.

"The Thomasons' are coming to the Ferns next week I think," said Courtenay.

"Are they?" said Leonard, looking pleased; "I am glad of that."

Courtenay smiled. Florence gave another anxious glance towards Leonard.

A little scented note was now brought in to Maud from Mrs. Reynolds, pleading the rain as an excuse for not calling, and pressing her to spend a few days at Heathfield before she returned to Erlesmede.

"It is exceedingly kind," said Maud; "but I cannot—Papa will want me."

"Not if he comes here," said Leonard; "do go—I should so like to have my father staying with me."

"You won't do for Papa—you don't know his ways," said Maud.

"He has no ways," replied Leonard.

"Why he absolutely wants to get rid of me!" exclaimed Maud.

"Like the mothers we were talking of," said Courtenay.

"I should be truly glad if you would come, Miss Warrenne," said Florence; "it would be a comfort to me."

Times were changed indeed! Maud looked at her pale face and accepted at once.

The weather had cleared by this time, and Florence, and Courtenay, rose to return home.

"We shall see you to-morrow in time for dinner," said Florence to Maud.

"And please to remember that you are engaged to me for the first quadrille," said Courtenay, as he left the room.

CHAPTER X.

La. M.—Things without remedy
Should be without regard—what's done, is done
Macbeth.

Ant.—Were you not weary? of my faith—
Ism.—I think you were,
Ant.—What, Lady?
Ism.—Weary of your faith—'tis a burden
That men faint under, though they bear little of it.
Maid in the Mill.

As soon as the afternoon service was over, Leonard drove his sister to Heathfield, according to her promise. He did not get out of the carriage, although Mrs. Reynolds had forewarned whoever might receive him to beg that he would dine with them. He simply left his

compliments and regrets that he was expected back to dinner. Mrs. Reynolds, in all her delight at receiving Maud, could not help mingling a few little reproaches that she had not managed to detain her handsome brother. A little coaxing on her part would certainly have done it—and all women knew how to coax.

"No; Leonard was expecting papa," said Maud; "I could not have persuaded him to be absent when papa arrived."

"And if I had but thought of it, we might have secured Mr. Warrenne too! Mr. Reynolds, I wish I had!"

"I wish you had," said Mr. Reynolds, gravely.

"And now it is time to dress; and Miss Warrenne has not seen baby! Come with me, we will pay a visit to the nursery as we go, my dear Maud."

Mrs. Reynolds took Maud's arm and led her off, exclaiming as they went up stairs—

"How wonderfully well you are looking—and so beautifully drest! That little bonnet, my dear—and what a beautiful silk—don't you love that style of trimming?—I wish it would never go out. Don't you think poor Florence looks sadly? Between you and me, those very brilliant blondes always go off early—*always*. What a mercy it is that her marriage was arranged before she got so pale; and Mr. Courtenay, who is the best of men, does not care a straw whether she is white or black—he told me so himself—he said he did not marry her for her complexion—one evening when she looked absolutely *sallow!* my dear. What *does* he marry her for, I wonder?"

By this time they had reached the nursery door. Mrs. Reynolds paused with the handle in her hand, and added, almost in a whisper—

"Between ourselves, Florence does not absolutely dote on her *futur*; but what is to be done? you can't have everything; but I shall be glad for her, poor girl, when it is over

and settled, because now she naturally wishes to put it off, and when there is no help for it I dare say she will be very happy."

What a prospect! thought Maud, as they entered the nursery. The little Lyles overwhelmed her with caresses. Mrs. Reynolds drew her gently away.

"There, there, my darlings, don't quite eat up Miss Warrenne, because I want her to look at little darling brother."

Maud instantly pronounced him to be the finest child she had ever seen; and as her experience among the infant tribe was not very extensive, this assertion was tolerably sincere.

They loitered away so much time in the nursery that Maud feared she would be late; but when she came down stairs the drawing-room was vacant.

She took up a book and drew her chair near the window. There was a broad walk which extended all along that side of the house, covered overhead by a verandah hung

with all sorts of creeping plants. Courtenay and Florence, already drest, were walking slowly up and down this walk. They were talking in a low voice, but everything was so still that Maud could not avoid catching a few sentences.

"Then shall I speak to-day, after dinner?" asked Courtenay with something of impatience in his manner.

"No, not yet, *pray*, Mr. Courtenay; we shall have such a scene!"

"But why not now? What is the use of driving it off?"

"We don't know what may happen," murmured Florence.

"What do you expect will happen? Do you think we are likely to be the subject of a miracle?" asked Courtenay, drily.

"No, but we cannot tell—perhaps—"

"I should very much like to know what you are looking forward to," remarked Courtenay.

"I'm so wretched, Mr. Courtenay," murmured Florence.

"I'm extremely sorry for it," said Courtenay, still more drily; "perhaps you don't know that Young is coming down on Tuesday about the settlements."

An exclamation of dismay broke from Florence, and she caught hold of the trellis-work of the verandah as if to support herself.

"Fact!" said Courtenay, "well, what's to be done?"

"If you could—suppose you were—no, that won't do!" said Florence, turning away with a gesture of despair.

"When you become a little more definite, I shall be happy to obey you implicitly," said Courtenay.

Florence stamped her foot on the ground as if she was suffering acute pain.

"Are you playing with me?" said Courtenay, quickly, as if struck with a sudden suspicion. "Do you mean it?"

"Good heaven! Do I mean it?" exclaimed Florence, almost with a cry.

"Well then—to-day?"

"No! only a very few days—a week!"

Courtenay turned round with a gesture of impatience that seemed to be beyond his control, and entered the window abruptly.

"He has been trying to make her fix the day," thought Maud, "and he can't succeed. It *is* provoking!"

Florence, looking flushed and agitated, walked to the other side of the room, as if to get as far as possible from Mr. Courtenay. He threw a glance at her, not very affectionate in its character, and took a chair by Maud.

"It is extremely warm to-day," he said.

"You look hot," replied Maud.

Courtenay bit his lips, and Florence could not help smiling.

"I wish you would come and sit by me, Miss Warrenne," said she; "Mr. Courtenay is not very good company just now."

"With all my heart," said Maud crossing over.

"You had better have staid where you were," said Courtenay, drily, "for Miss Reynolds is not good company at any time."

Maud looked from one to the other, uncertain whether to laugh or not. Florence looked frightened.

At this moment Mr. and Mrs. Reynolds came in, accompanied by the curate, Mr. Meek.

Mr. Reynolds offered his arm to Maud—Mr. Meek took Mrs. Reynolds—Courtenay went up to Florence.

"If we begin to quarrel," he whispered, as they crossed the hall, "there are some hopes for me."

"Oh! Mr. Courtenay, be friends," said Florence.

"I should like to see you take a decided part," said Courtenay.

"Indeed, you cannot judge of my difficulties," said Florence.

"Well, if you put it off till it is too late, don't lay the blame on me!" returned Courtenay, as they took their seats at the table.

Mr. Reynolds was much pleased to see his daughter and her lover on such confidential terms—he spoke to Florence very kindly several times during dinner.

"You are in favour at the bottom of the table to-day," said Courtenay, ironically.

"Yes," said Florence, blushing; "he thinks that we—he sees that—I—"

"Will you take some wine?" said Courtenay, laughing at her confusion.

Dinner was always a long business at Heathfield. Mr. Reynolds' cook was famous, and he liked his entertainments to be splendid.

It was nine o'clock before the ladies rose from table. Mrs. Reynolds went straight up into the nursery, leaving the young ladies *tête-a-tête* in the drawing-room.

After a few common-place sentences, Florences taking courage from the twilight, for

the lamps were not yet lit, said to Maud, with rather an uncertain voice,—

"Is your brother pleased with Forrel Court?"

"He would be a fastidious, grumbling wretch if he were not," said Maud. "Yes, he is delighted with it. He is so fond of the country that he means always to live there, except when he goes abroad for a little change."

"Report has not spared his name, as you might expect," said Florence, her voice becoming still less firm; "he has been given already to one of the Miss Stapyltons."

"No! do you know to which of them?" exclaimed Maud; "that would be too absurd! That would be pitiful of Leonard—girls who, I give you my word, would have felt themselves insulted if he had dared to speak to them, before he came into his fortune—girls who treated him, not as a gentlemen with the blood of the old Normans in his veins, but as a simple

merchant's clerk! There is not a word of truth in *that* report, however! Besides, Leonard declares he will never marry!"

Florence felt that this last remark touched her nearly; but she managed to say—

"Young men's declarations on that subject are seldom to be taken literally."

"Oh! no," returned Maud, "he means it now; but I have a sort of a hope, a kind of presentiment—however, time will show!"

Florence longed to ask who Maud suspected of having made some impression on her brother —but at that moment the gentlemen came in, the lamps were lit, the tea and coffee carried round; Mrs Reynolds descended from the nursery, and conversation became general.

As soon as the last coffee cup had disappeared, Maud was requested to sing. She asked for a volume of "Handel," and placing herself at the piano, she began that exquisite lament of Jephtha's daughter,—"Ye sacred Priests."

Courtenay standing near her, listened as those listen whose love of music is a passion; but he made no remark when she had finished.

Mr. Reynolds was loud in his commendations—Mrs. Reynolds nodded to Mr. Meek, and reminded him that she had promised him a treat. Mr. Meek, who was a little sly-looking man, with an unbounded opinion of himself, stalked up to Maud, enquired who was her master, and then turning over the leaves, begged her to sing, "Rejoice greatly."

It was a difficult undertaking, but her fresh elastic voice seemed to master the most intricate passages without an effort. Mr. Meek assured her that she had sung it extremely well, and found another in the same style; "From Mighty Kings." Maud sang it with the same ease, and then remarked laughingly that as she had tired the whole company including herself, she hoped that some one else would kindly supply her place Mr. Reynolds

politely declared that it was impossible for any one to venture after such singing as he had just heard—and added for his daughter's benefit that it would be well if all young people turned their time to account as Miss Warrenne had done—for that such a delightful talent as hers was a perpetual source of enjoyment to a family circle.

For Mr. Reynolds firmly believed that an equal amount of application would always produce an equal amount of excellence. A theory that is daily confuted by experience, but which it suited him to hold, and therefore he was not likely to alter it.

It was a great amusement to Maud to watch Florence and Mr. Courtenay—she was in a perpetual puzzle at their manner to one another—it was such a complete contrast to anything she had seen in Alice and Captain Scudamore, and her experience of engaged people went no further. There was certainly something confidential at times in their way of

speaking to each other, which contradicted their general indifference.

"Florence is actually coming down this morning," said Mrs. Reynolds, as they began to assemble in the breakfast room; "you must take that as a particular compliment to yourself, my dear Maud."

"I'm much obliged," said Maud, smiling.

"What am *I* to be?" asked Courtenay.

"Mortified, of course," replied Mrs. Reynolds, with her pretty little laugh.

"Well, how are you?" asked Courtenay, as Florence entered.

"Oh! pretty well," replied Florence, looking graciously round; "good morning—isn't it going to be very hot to-day?"

"Do you know, Florence dear, you look quite blooming?" said Mrs. Reynolds. "I was in hopes Mr. Courtenay was going to remark it."

"I knew you would save me the trouble," replied Courtenay.

Florence laughed a little and drew her chair to the table.

"If I were Miss Reynolds, I would make you pay well for that speech!" said Maud.

"Miss Reynolds does not mind it," said Courtenay.

"That does not excuse you!" retorted Maud.

"I so enjoy a quarrel!" said Courtenay, handing her a plate with a slice of ham upon it.

"I never eat meat for breakfast," said Maud, putting it away.

"That is because I cut it for you," said Courtenay.

"Think so, if you like!" returned Maud.

"Shall we see our friend Leonard to-day, do you think?" asked Courtenay.

"No, he will be with papa."

"I thought he might possibly come to look after you," remarked Courtenay.

"What? do you mean to say I want looking after?" exclaimed Maud.

"Think so, if you like," retorted Courtenay.

"Miss Reynolds, will you teaze him?" said Maud.

The entrance of Mr. Reynolds, looking very grim and starched, put a stop to this sort of talk.

Mr. Courtenay began a sensible conversation with him on the weight of the atmosphere, which he seemed greatly to enjoy, and quoted largely in his turn from a recent work on pneumatics.

Florence became dumb. Mrs. Reynolds, whose spirit of enjoyment seemed boundless, sat listening with a look as if she said "How very nice!" although every word they uttered was Hebrew to her.

"As soon as breakfast was over, Mr. Reynolds went straight to his study to write letters. Mrs. Reynolds hastened to the nursery

to see the children, after promising Maud that she should certainly see baby washed before she left; and Florence rose to take Maud round the garden.

"Don't go out just yet," said Courtenay, who was reading the paper; "I shall be with you in a minute."

"Well, what next?" said Maud, throwing back her beautiful little head like a bird.

Florence turned to Mr. Courtenay as they passed, and said with great emphasis—

"Young is *not* coming here on Tuesday, Mr. Courtenay, for Sir Ralph Masters is just dead, and he has no end of business to do for the family. He told papa not to expect him for a fortnight at least."

"Oh, that's what made you look so comfortable this morning," said Courtenay, just looking up from his paper for a moment, and then resuming his reading with the utmost composure.

"What a life I would lead that man, if I

were in your place!" exclaimed Maud, as they went out upon the lawn.

"How I wish you were," sighed Florence.

"Come, now we must begin to arrange about this ball," said Courtenay, as he joined them in the garden.

"If you can descend from your hydrostatics!" said Maud, laughing

They sat down in the roothouse. Florence remembered that she had not brought her work. Courtenay offered to fetch it.

"And bring me a book at the same time, please," said Maud, "because when we have done our business together, I shall find you so very dull."

"You know how to manage him," said Florence, as Courtenay went away laughing. "How I wish you were not going back to-morrow."

"I have brought you a pencil and paper, instead of a book," said Courtenay; you must make a list of the people you mean to invite."

"Come then," said Maud, drawing to the rustic table. "Miss Reynolds, will you help?"

Florence smiling, laid down her work, She began to feel the influence of Maud's gaiety.

"Every soul has called on Leonard, and therefore he may invite every body," said Maud, beginning to write. "Why absolutely the man has given me a pencil without any point—just like him! Cut it, will you!"

Courtenay looking delighted, cut the pencil, and returned it to her. She began again.

"The Stapyltons—four daughters and a son—the mamma, of course," said Maud, as she entered the name.

"Oh, that treasure of a mother!" said Courtenay. "What do you think, Miss Reynolds, I met Sir Frederic the other morning, and he vowed he was writing a comedy on purpose to introduce Mrs. Stapylton; and that he had set his mind on Wright playing her part! Picture Wright's face in her Bérèt."

Florence laughed more merrily than she had done for a long time.

"Eight Mansells, Miss Warrenne," she said, when she had recovered her voice. "There are three sons."

"Eight," said Maud; "four Gordons. How many Bradfords, Miss Reynolds?"

"One daughter out. I dare say, though Fanny would be very glad to come."

"And she is prettier than Mary," remarked Courtenay.

"That has so much to do with it!" said Maud; "but I will put down two Bradfords."

"Who are the Sharpes?" asked Courtenay, who was looking over Maud.

"Don't you know?" said Florence; "the hosier people!"

"Oh, heavens! Miss Warrenne, don't have them!" cried Courtenay. "Hosiers!"

"I want them to laugh at," said Maud.

"Oh, if you laugh at your neighbours!" said Courtenay.

"And what were you doing just now, if you please, at Mrs. Stapylton?" said Maud, demurely.

Florence laughed even more hearily than before.

"Besides, Mrs. Sharpe brags so delightfully," said Maud. "She says she is related to Sir Vincent Sharpe."

"She—makes a mistake," said Courtenay. "I know Sir Vincent Sharpe."

"And then she has a son who is worth his weight in gold; such a creature! He is in the army!"

"Good heavens! how could he get a commission?"

"I don't know; but *there he is*," said Maud, decidedly.

"The world is coming to an end, as my aunt Thomason says," remarked Mr. Courtenay; "put down the Sharpes!"

"What a hideous creature that Mr. Sharpe is," said Florence.

"Isn't he? with his moustache like a row of great corking pins thrust through this upper lip," said Maud.

"What an enviable partner he would have been in the time of the Coranto?" said Courtenay, drily.

"For shame, Mr. Courtenay," said Florence, laughing.

"The dance always finished by the cavalier saluting his partner," replied Courtenay, in answer to Maud's look of enquiry.

"For shame, indeed!" said Maud; "but his manners, Miss Reynolds—the tone in which he asks you how you do—he surely must be the original from which Dickens drew the character of *Bill Sykes*."

"I am sorry to see that you are *both* of you in love with Mr. Sharpe," said Courtenay, "because, however amiable he may be, he can only take compassion on one."

"Could not we take some revenge upon

him?" exclaimed Maud. "I don't like to be insulted."

Florence could not speak for laughing.

"You have done Miss Reynolds a world of good already," said Courtenay.

"That you have," said Florence; "I don't feel like the same person; it is too bad to lose you to-morrow."

"You should ask Miss Warrenne to be one of your bridesmaids," said Courtenay, ironically.

"Perhaps Miss Warrenne may be married before me," said Florence, hesitating.

"I should not wonder," said Courtenay, drily.

"Not I, believe me!" returned Maud, laughing. "I should like to be a bridesmaid —let me, Miss Reynolds?"

"It would give me the greatest pleasure— if—" said Florence, looking for help from Courtenay.

"It is settled, then," said Courtenay; "only—don't buy your dress before the day is fixed—it might get out of fashion."

"Hardly," said Maud, laughing; but she could not help wondering at Courtenay's ironical smile, and Florence's look of embarrassment.

"Well, as you were anxious to read, I have provided for your entertainment," said Courtenay, drawing a book from his pocket.

It was the treatise on *Pneumatics.*

"I am absolutely tired of quarrelling with him," said Maud, dropping the book disdainfully on the table, and turning to look over Miss Reynolds' work; "it is too much trouble to go on scolding such a hardened person."

"You would naturally find that, much more amusing than my conversation," said Courtenay.

"Perhaps so," returned Maud, looking at him over her shoulder; "and now, as we don't want you, I should advise you to go

back into the house — we are going to talk secrets."

Courtenay laughed, got up, and walked carelessly out of the arbour.

CHAPTER X.

Cel.—Sure he's hard-hearted
That can look on and not relent, and deeply
At such a misery. She is not married?
Val.—Not yet.
Cel.—Nor near it?
Val.—When she please.

Beaumont and Fletcher.

"You are not going to Erlesmede," said Leonard, when he called for his sister the next day; "you are going back with me. My father has agreed to stay with me for some time; and, besides, I'm not very well. I really wish to consult him."

Perhaps at this time few persons in the United Kingdom were blessed with more per-

fect health than he enjoyed; but as paragons of perfection are seldom to be met with out of books, Leonard, who had much of the refinement and sensibility of character that belongs to a woman, wanted something of the energy and resolution that looks well in a man.

The duties of a man of large fortune are important, but they are rather indefinite. Leonard had every wish to fulfil his duties—he had a deep sense of the responsibility of life—but he was rather supine. Things which could be done any day, were put off from week to week. He fancied he had not time to execute plans, and to examine accounts, which when he was really employed from morning till night he would have dispatched in a leisure half hour.

Maud fretted over this want of activity;—Her rapid mind could not endure to pause over any project once started. She wished that Leonard's estate should be a model—that his schools, and almshouses, and farms should all be quoted as unexceptionable. She lamented

deeply the torpor that seemed to obscure his faculties. A little light literature—a little sketching of the neighbouring scenery—a great deal of dawdling and gossiping with the gardeners—and a few attempts to make himself acquainted with botany and horticulture;—these slight occupations seemed to fill up his day. But as they did not furnish quite employment enough for a rational being, Leonard provided himself with another source of daily interest. He fancied himself an invalid. He had spent the interval of Maud's absence at Heathfield, in trying to convince his father that his lungs were absolutely gone. The whole College of Physicians would have been puzzled by the variety of extraordinary symptoms which he urged in support of this idea.

Mr. Warrenne smiled over these contradictory statements, refused to prescribe anything, and turned the subject whenever he could.

Mr. Courtenay seemed to think this notion

of Leonard's such an excellent jest that he humoured it in every possible way, and spent some time in endeavouring to persuade him that he was the victim of a variety of other fatal complaints.

"It was all very well to fancy himself ill when he was at that gloomy office," said Maud, one day when Courtenay called in as usual to arrange about the ball, and Leonard was at another table, answering notes; "but now its too provoking when he has everything he could desire."

"A happy individual!" said Courtenay; "are you equally favoured by fortune?"

"No;" retorted Maud, "how can I be comfortable, when I see him dreaming away his time as he does! Ill!—it would serve him right to have a fit of illness in good earnest."

And then how some of us would fret," said Courtenay.

"Not you for one!" replied Maud.

"No; you would fret enough for both of us," returned Courtenay.

"Who have accepted, Leonard, dear?" said Maud, crossing over quickly to her brother.

Leonard took up a large handful of open notes that lay before him, and gave them to his sister.

She stood looking over them; and Mr. Courtenay, who had come nearer to her, fixed his eyes attentively on her face.

"You never tell me how Miss Reynolds does?" said Maud, looking up, and starting a little, on finding him gazing at her.

"You never ask me," said Courtenay.

"I meant to ask you to-day, only you began directly about the supper-room."

"She's very well, I believe," said Courtenay.

"You believe!" retorted Maud. "I say Leonard, you won't mind the leaves being gathered off the ice plants to garnish the dishes of fruit—will you, dear?"

"Not at all," said Leonard.

"And do tell Phillips not to be cross, but to make up two *immense* bouquets for Alice and me?"

"Certainly," said Leonard, absently.

"You understand, dear?" said Maud.

"Yes," said Leonard, who was sketching trees listlessly with a pen in his blotting book; "what day is it to be?"

"You had better keep him close prisoner till it's over," said Courtenay.

"To forget the day! and he dances so well!" exclaimed Maud, lifting up her eyes.

"Miss Reynolds jibbed a little when the invitations came," said Courtenay; "she fancied that she would not be well enough to attend."

"I'm sure I am as little in a condition to go through a ball as any one," said Leonard.

"Poor victim!" said Courtenay; "shall I run for Mr. Warrenne—I see him standing out by the conservatory."

"Don't teaze him!" said Maud.

"He had better drive over to Heathfield the night of the ball, to keep Miss Reynolds company," said Courtenay; and leave you and me to do the honours."

"That would be so very correct!" replied Maud.

"And when we returned to Heathfield, we should find that the two invalids had departed," added Courtenay.

Leonard took up a book and seemed to be reading very attentively.

"But we *shall* see Miss Reynolds, I hope?" said Maud.

"Yes, the father who does not allow any illness in his house, has decreed that *all* go; to the great rejoicing of Mrs. Reynolds, who is glad to secure a little gaiety now and then."

"Heathfield is rather dull," said Maud.

"And lovers proverbially so," added Courtenay.

Maud smiled, she thought there were no *lovers* at Heathfield.

"Now if you and I were to make it out together," said Courtenay; "we would have none of that nonsense"

"What nonsense?" asked Maud.

"Keeping company, to be sure;" said Courtenay.

"What a wicked sneer you have!" said Maud.

"I bow to the compliment," said Courtenay.

"There is no one who provokes me so much as you," said Maud.

"I am glad of it," said Courtenay; "I could not provoke you once."

"You always did!" cried Maud.

"Then I was a fool not to follow it up," said Courtenay, hastily. "What is our friend reading?"

"Some dissertation on the genius of Pope," said Maud, looking over him.

"The old question, I suppose—whether Pope was a Poet," remarked Courtenay.

"What do you think on the subject?" asked Maud, who had now taken up her work.

"I never thought about it," replied Courtenay, "he was a man of genius—no one can deny that—his Essays are only a little less brilliant than those of Bacon—and as to whether the world has a *poet* more or less, it is a question of no importance whatever."

Oh, of course you undervalue poets!" said Maud, you don't consider a great poet a blessing to all ages! Just like you!"

Here she went on very busily with her work for a few minutes; a complicated fabric of beads and silk in crochet: presently she began again.

"I hate a good many things in this world! It is a very mean world! Once it was a very wicked world, but I do declare now it's chiefly mean! But I hate nothing so much as a per-

son who does not value poetry! But people who never feel, can't be expected to comprehend what is after all, only the language of feeling."

"Then you should not hate them;" said Courtenay, drily. "Not but that you are very welcome to hate me. It is worth being hated to make your eyes flash—they absolutely rain fire!"

Maud crimsoned to the temples. Leonard who was reading with his head resting on his hand, said languidly,—"How you two always quarrel."

"And you forget," said Courtenay, "that there is some poetry which is not merely the language of emotion—it appeals to the senses of the intellect—it delights the ear by it's harmonious diction—it calls up before the mind what painting and sculpture represent to the eye. I can admire that kind of poetry, Miss Warrenne, though I confess I never cry myself

thought with some satisfaction as she buttoned to sleep over a book, like the young man you admire so much in Rokeby."

"I?"

"Yes; are you not an advocate for the soft sensibilities of Master Wilfred?"

"No—and yet," said Maud, "I prefer even Wilfred to the callous sneering people one meets with in the present day, who have not the power of being touched by anything noble, or melted by anything pathetic; and who yet grow very angry if you don't give them credit for the virtues which they profess to disclaim."

"Ah!" said Courtenay, taking out his watch, "my time's up now. I must go and make the agreeable at Heathfield!"

"You have only to be the exact opposite of what you are here," said Maud, as they shook hands, "and you can't fail to be charming!"

Yet when he was gone, she felt rather dull —she could not quarrel with Leonard—so she asked him to take a ride with her;—but she

thought with some satisfaction as she buttoned

her habit,—"He will be sure to come to-morrow."

The day of the ball came at last. Mr. Courtenay rode over to Forrel Court in the morning to ask if everything was arranged;—and Maud got up a little quarrel with him because he refused to tell her what Miss Reynolds was to wear.

He had not the least idea himself what it was to be—but he took care not to put forward this plea for his silence.

When Maud came into the drawing-room that evening, in her pink crape dress with floating skirts, and her hair simply adorned with a white camelia, she found Leonard leaning against the mantel-piece, ready drest. She laid her fan and bouquet on the slab and began to put on her gloves.

"I am so glad you are ready, dear," she said; "I had my misgivings."

"How handsome you look to-night," said Leonard, raising his head, as she addressed him.

Maud made one of her provoking little curtseys.

"Papa is coming in for a few minutes," she said; "and then he means to go quietly off to bed. I have just made his tea for him."

Leonard took up her fan absently. "How often Courtenay is here!" he said.

"About the ball," replied Maud, hastily. "There is a carriage! Mr. Courtenay said that people would take care to be early, when so good a *parti* as yourself gave a ball—the first move might secure the game!"

The Heathfield party were among the earliest comers—Mrs. Reynolds looking lovely in a valuable white lace dress; Florence, in a silver muslin, with turquoise ornaments, almost like the Florence Leonard remembered at the Ferns. He hardly ventured to look at her—he remembered only that she had been un-

willing to accept the invitation, that she was in his house almost by compulsion. Fortunately he had present occupation in replying to the compliments of Mrs. Reynolds.

"This is really delightful—this is splendid!" she exclaimed; "only think! In the midst of the country, too—quite in the desert! Nothing could be better, even in London! You have a genius for these things, Mr. Warrenne Digby. I shall consult you when *I* give a ball!"

Leonard modestly pointed out Mr. Courtenay as the author of the *fête*.

"But then how good of you to do it! how very charitable! Really, when one thinks of the way most young men go on! and then to see you! It must be such a comfort to your family! I wish you would wait for Lucy!"

"With pleasure, if she will promise to grow up like her mother," said Leonard, smiling.

The Thomasons, with Colonel and Mrs. Creswick, were the next arrivals.

Ada looked more beautiful than ever. She wore a straw-coloured crape tunic over a *moire* dress of the same colour, with a simple garniture of bright green leaves, which enhanced the pure paleness of her features, transparent as a cameo, and the raven blackness of her hair.

Florence saw Leonard spring forward to meet her, and engage her for the first dance, almost before Mrs. Thomason could conclude her greeting.

"It is quite a dispensation," she sighed, glancing down the suite of rooms, perfumed with choice plants, and blazing with light; "and I hope you may long live to enjoy it!"

"I hope he may," said Courtenay, drily; "he has not begun yet."

The rooms were filling fast—the music struck up—Mr. Courtenay went to claim Maud for the quadrille.

"Really," she exclaimed, sinking down on a seat, with an air of great weariness, "it *is*

hard work to have to teach you your duty. Ought you not to be dancing with Miss Reynolds?"

"She is engaged to Lester Stapylton," said Courtenay.

"And are you going to fight to-morrow morning?" asked Maud, rising.

"Not that I know of."

"There's something very wrong about you," said Maud, shaking her head. "Now take my fan, and my handkerchief, and my *flaçon*, and my bouquet, and if you drop any thing, beware!"

"Anything else?" asked Courtenay, carelessly.

"Not at present."

"Then, since I'm loaded, I suppose we may start," he said, moving to the dancers.

Sir Frederic Manning came with the Scudamores, while the quadrille was going forward. The Stapyltons, ranged along the wall, nodded and smiled to him in vain.

Mr. Sharpe, of whose beauty honourable mention has been made, was lounging round the room, with his hands behind him, and surveying all the women with a brutal air of indifference as if he asked them how they dared come in his presence.

"If Mr. Sharpe asks you to dance," said Mrs. Stapylton to Albina, "mind and be very agreeable to him; laugh at all he says—Sir Frederic may fail. See how he's talking to that little designing thing, Mrs. Scudamore."

"La! how pretty she looks," interposed Miss Laura, "in that love of a pink crape, like her sister. I declare I think they are the prettiest women in the room."

"Don't talk nonsense, Laura!" said her mother.

Mr. Sharpe was now introduced to Albina, and grunted a few words, purporting that he meant to dance with her.

"Mind!" said her mother, as Mr. Sharpe lounged away till the dance should begin.

"He's such a wretch, Mamma!" said Albina, turning to look at Sir Frederic.

"No matter," said her mother; "he's in the Army—that is a position at once. Like the Church."

"But his father is a tradesman," said Albina, acceding to the statement that the Army and the Church were exactly similar professions. I am sure his brother officers must look down on him."

"Never mind, that is a little private matter between yourselves. In the eyes of the world you would be Mrs. Sharpe, whose husband is in the Dragoons: that is quite enough to mention in the neighbourhood, or to put in the papers, when you are married."

"Would I marry a hosier!" exclaimed Miss Laura, jumping up and down on her seat.

"Be quiet," exclaimed her mother; you will marry nobody if your hair comes out of curl. Sarah, there is Mr. Meek; try to catch his eye."

"Our ball seems going off very well," said Mr. Courtenay, coming up to Maud, as she stood gaily talking to Mr. Scudamore and Sir Frederic Manning.

"Does it not? Will you find a partner for one of the Stapylton's?"

"Mr. Meek has just asked one—Mr. Sharpe the other," said Mr. Courtenay. "Will you waltz with me?"

"I'm engaged to Sir Frederic."

"Afterwards?" said Courtenay.

"I'm engaged to Dick."

"After that?"

"I can't remember more than three deep."

"Where are your tablets?"

"I have none. Is Miss Reynolds engaged?"

"To me—the next quadrille."

Sir Frederic and Maud fell into the circle of waltzers; then Leonard and Mrs. Reynolds; then Ada with one Mr. Tracey, whom everybody envied her, because he was the second son

of a lord. Florence followed with Mr. Lester Stapylton. Miss Albina was tearing round and round with Mr. Sharpe, as if they had been on the treadmill. Everybody seemed to be enjoying themselves very much—as they always do at a ball—but if their feelings could be laid open, it is possible they might not correspond exactly with the outward show.

It was the opinion of the elder ladies that Leonard was paying his addresses to Ada Thomason; and Sir Frederic Manning to Maud. In fact, Sir Frederic had danced with Maud as often as he could find her disengaged; and Leonard had not only danced with Ada several times, but talked with her more than with any other young lady in the room. The friendliness of Mr. and Mrs. Thomason's manner towards him—his intimacy with her cousin, Mr. Courtenay, all seemed to countenance the idea. Many a castle in the air was demolished by the sight of Leonard dancing the *Deux-temps* with Ada Thomason.

"They seem to be getting on very comfortably," said Courtenay to Maud, pointing out his cousin and Leonard, who were standing together beneath a perfect thicket of geraniums, waiting to join the circle of waltzers again, and in the meantime engaged in an earnest conversation.

"Don't they?" said Maud smiling; "but after this waltz will you remind Leonard to dance with Mrs. Fergusson; she is a bride, and he really forgets."

"Ah! that reminds me that Mr. Tracey begged me to introduce him to you for the next quadrille."

"I had rather not," said Maud; "I don't wish to be introduced to people just because Leonard has got Forrel Court. I am satisfied to know those people who were acquainted with me before."

"But this is a little bit of pride, is it not?" said Mr. Courtenay.

"Very likely," returned Maud.

"Why you surely are not piqued because people let you alone when they thought they could get nothing out of you," said Courtenay; "you never surely took it in your head that people ought to seek you *for yourself* instead of your dinners and suppers! You never gave them credit for selecting and discriminating, did you? or wishing for anything in the shape of human intercourse instead of herding together like brutes? People! swine!—you have indeed been looking for the silk purse where you are only like to find the—you know the proverb."

"And then you talk to me about pride!" said Maud, laughing.

"The fact is," replied Mr. Courtenay, joining in the laugh, "that you and I are pretty well matched in that respect."

"Then we have both something that ought to be got rid of," said Maud.

"Ah! that is a beautiful bouquet of yours," said Courtenay, taking it from her.

"Do you like gardenias?"

"Of all things; I am going to take one of these."

"I don't know that I can spare it."

"And how do you like Miss Reynolds' dress after all?" asked Courtenay, throwing away the carnation that he wore and replacing it by a gardenia from Maud's bouquet.

"Oh!" said Maud, turning round to look, "it's beautiful."

"Miss Warrenne am I so happy as to find you disengaged?" asked Sir Frederic, approaching her.

"You are that fortunate man, Sir Frederic," said Maud, taking his arm.

"And won't you dance with Tracey?" asked Courtenay.

"Mr. Courtenay, don't you see that I am engaged?" replied Maud, holding out her hand for her bouquet.

Mr. Courtenay remained leaning in one of the windows watching the dancers. Colonel

Creswick went up to Leonard, who was standing before Ada's chair talking to her, and carried him off to be introduced to some lady. Ada rose directly and came hastily across the room to her cousin.

"Well, am I to congratulate you? Everybody says it is a settled thing," said Mr. Courtenay.

"Charles, he has got my statue!" exclaimed Ada, sinking on a seat by his side.

"Enlighten me," said Mr. Courtenay drily.

"He—Sir Frederic; so Mr. Warrenne Digby tells me—is it possible; do you think it is true?" asked Ada rapidly.

"I will take your word for it," said Courtenay quietly; "this is the first I have heard of it."

"Think, Charles! He went to Rome on purpose to procure it," exclaimed Ada.

"To Rome, eh?" said Mr. Courtenay, looking down on his cousin's agitated face, and thinking it necessary to make some remark.

"And he has never once asked me to dance, Charles," said Ada, clasping her cousin's hand; "what does he mean—what shall I do?"

"As to what he means, I dare say he does not know himself; few people do," returned Mr. Courtenay. "As to what you should do, why, dance with somebody else."

"Charles, I'm serious—I'm miserable!" said Ada; "Do advise me—there's some misunderstanding that a word would set to rights."

"I have one woman's affairs on my hands now," said Mr. Courtenay; "and they seem to be more than I can quite manage; for Heaven's sake don't give me your's into the bargain.

"But Charles, is it reasonable to go all the way to Italy for that statue, and then not to pay me the common courtesy of asking me to dance?"

"Reasonable—No!" replied Mr. Courtenay.

"Charles, tell papa that I wish to go home directly," said Ada impatiently.

"And the Creswick's, they will feel obliged to leave too; you can't make the move before supper," said Courtenay. "Don't be a child; command yourself."

The supper-room was opened. Leonard came in search of Ada. Everybody became convinced that she had won the prize. Mrs. Reynolds rallied him upon it as she took her place on the other side of him.

"I'm half angry with you," she whispered; "yes—a little of that mayonnaise if you please—for not waiting for Lucy! but you will have a very charming little wife."

"I assure you, Mrs. Reynolds——"

"Yes—rely on my discretion—what, you hav'nt spoken yet! You don't intend. Oh, nonsense! I'll make you an opportunity. You like my coiffure? You think it divine! What a charming creature you are."

It was a warm moonlight night; one of the latest days of June. The windows of the supper-room opened to the ground, and were left

unclosed on account of the heat. Some of the young people fancied they should like a turn upon the terrace. Shawls were brought in haste for the more prudent of the young ladies; the gentlemen accompanied them bareheaded. The terrace, lighted by the lamps from within, was quickly thronged by the guests. Some sat on the low stone parapet that separated the upper from the lower terrace, others sauntered slowly up and down. The moon was just rising behind the stately cedars, and throwing its silver hue on the closely mown lawn. The ladies were eating ices; the gentlemen gathering flowers with the dew upon them, to present to their partners. The music from the ball-room came on the air with a wailing sound.

Ada was seated on the wall, looking at the moon through the cedar boughs.

Leonard was persuading her to dance the Post Horn Galop. She said she was tired; that the night was too warm; that, in fact, she was

not in spirits for it—that she had danced enough.

Sir Frederic and Captain Scudamore were passing slowly down the walk.

"A thousand times more beautiful," said Sir Frederic, in reply to something his companion remarked.

"I'll dance it with you," said Ada, "if you will find out what those two were talking of as they passed us."

Leonard went directly after Captain Scudamore, and came back with a smile.

"You will forgive me," he said.

"If you have succeeded," replied Ada.

"Well, then, my brother-in-law remarked that you were as handsome as your statue, and Sir Frederic's reply was 'a thousand times more beautiful.'"

"Come," said Ada, "they are beginning the galop."

"Dear, dear," said Mrs. Thomason coming fussing up to Mr. Courtenay, "there's Ada

dancing that galop with Mr. Warrenne Digby, at such a rate—she will tire herself to death. Not that I can have any objection, you know, Charles, to such a delightful young man, for one moment—every mother must feel gratified, I'm sure—but it will be the death of her. Couldn't you put a stop to it? I've been making signs to her this half-hour."

In fact Mrs. Thomason had been for some time making those mysterious signals to her daughter, to which elderly ladies are addicted when they are anxious to express their meaning, and which, when they have never been conspicuous for grace, are rather apt to become ludicrous to the bystanders. And the *Post Horn Galop* not being exactly a dance where the people pause and look about them, Ada had been flitting past her mother a hundred times without becoming at all aware of her solicitude.

"My dear aunt," said Mr. Courtenay, drily,

"she seems very comfortable; let everybody be happy their own way."

"Ah! Charles, its easy to talk," sighed Mrs. Thomason, "you are not a mother! Ada had a very bad cough at the beginning of the winter."

As it was now the middle of the summer, this information did not strike dismay into the heart of Mr. Courtenay—he turned to Miss Reynolds, and asked her if she had a mind to join in the galop.

Florence made a sign in the negative.

"They dance well, do they not?" said Courtenay, looking at Ada and Leonard.

"Perfectly," replied Florence.

"You are tired," said Courtenay.

"Wearied almost to death," she replied.

"The joys of a ball," remarked Courtenay.

"Mr. Courtenay," said Florence, with an abruptness of manner that seemed to reveal the most absolute despair; "Mr. Young comes to-morrow. If you care to let it all go on—

if you are not utterly wearied and disgusted with the engagement—let it be fulfilled—say nothing to my father—he is the best judge, after all."

"Be it so, Miss Reynolds. I am entirely at your orders," said Mr. Courtenay, in a calm voice; but, as he finished speaking, he took the gardenia from his coat and laid it down on the corner of the mantel-piece.

Florence did not see him. She remained looking vacantly at the dancers. Leonard and Ada still, at intervals, flew past her—then her attention seemed quickened for a moment.

"And there you are, all out of breath, and the carriage waiting!" exclaimed Mrs. Thomason, as Leonard at last handed her daughter to a seat. "You have been very much admired, my dear, and you never looked better; but, good gracious, how tired you will be to-morrow."

"Don't believe it, mamma," said Ada. "I have enjoyed myself too much to feel tired.

Mr. Warrenne Digby, I have had a most delightful evening. Did you say the carriage was ready? I won't keep the horses. I never was at such a charming ball in my life!"

She was looking beautiful indeed. The dance had brought a scarlet colour upon the transparent paleness of her cheeks, and her splendid black eyes glowed beneath the calm breadth of her low Greek forehead. Two or three purple locks had been loosened by her rapid movements, and fell disordered upon her ivory shoulders.

Sir Frederic followed her hastily into the cloak-room.

"But you are going to put on something more than that?" he said, helping Ada to put on her shawl.

"No, this will do very well," said Ada, wrapping her light *barège* all round her.

Leonard was hanging on the shoulders of Mrs. Thomason a large red velvet opera cloak. A clothes-horse could hardly have made a

more efficient screen for people who had any little private remarks to make together. But Sir Frederic remained steadily looking at Ada, without uttering a word. There seemed some difficulty between Mrs. Thomason's turban and the hood of her cloak. At last it was arranged to her satisfaction.

"Now Ada, there's your papa," she said, moving into the hall.

"Miss Thomason, I wish to heaven you had not a sixpence in the world!" exclaimed Sir Frederic, standing directly in the doorway.

"So do I, Sir Frederic," replied Ada, raising her magnificent eyes for one moment to his.

Sir Frederic stared at her for a minute, and, to say the truth, he had a very unceremonious stare, and then taking her hand to lead her to the carriage, said hastily,—

"Perhaps I may be allowed to call upon Mr. Thomason to-morrow morning?"

Ada had only time for a smile and a little bend of her head; but that was quite enough for any sensible man, and as Mrs. Thorns used to say to him, "You don't want sense—it would be well for you if you didn't want anything else."

"Well Leonard, dear," said Maud, as they stood together in the deserted rooms, "it's over, at last."

"And I have heard you so much admired, Maud," said Leonard, looking proudly at her.

"And you, Leonard—I'm too tired to repeat all the fine things the ladies said of you."

"Alice looked remarkably pretty," said Leonard.

"So Dick thought," said Maud, laughing. "He told me fairly he thought her the prettiest woman in the room."

"Well, good night, dear," said Leonard, taking up his candle.

"My gardenia!" exclaimed Maud, pausing as she passed the mantel-piece.

She took it up and went thoughtfully to her room.

CHAPTER XI.

Cel.—O my afflicted heart, how thou art tortured!
And love how like a tyrant thou reign'st in me,
Commanding and forbidding at one instant!
Monsieur Thomas.

Ladies seldom make their appearance very early after a ball. In town the hours are all arranged to suit each other; but in the country where people insist on breakfasting at their usual time, it is inconvenient to sit up all night. Mr. Reynolds thought he did a great deal in adjourning breakfast to ten o'clock, at which hour precisely he came down, starched as usual, and greeted Mr. Courtenay, who was always an early riser.

"Mrs. Reynolds will not appear," he said, beginning grimly to make the tea; "she is very much fatigued with her evening, and intends taking her breakfast in her room. As to Florence, I conclude that we shall see her every minute."

"No doubt," said Mr. Courtenay; "unless she is tired also."

"I imagine there must be something fatiguing in dancing," said Mr. Reynolds, gravely buttering his dry toast.

Certainly he had never tried.

"I should not wonder," said Mr. Courtenay. "I only know it does not tire me."

"I have always deprecated these pleasures," said Mr. Reynolds; "they are at once absurd and injurious. What benefit does a young woman derive from running about a room all night, and finding herself unfit to fulfil her duties in the morning? It is now half-past ten."

"Very true!" said Mr. Courtenay.

Breakfast went on in silence—the gentlemen then looked over the papers—a few remarks passed on the subject of the railways. Soon a carriage was heard to drive to the door.

"I rather think that is my solicitor," said Mr. Reynolds, rising from table; "I have some business of my own to transact before I come to yours."

Courtenay bowed, and Mr. Reynolds went to his study.

Soon after, Florence came down; looking so much paler, so much older indeed, that a common acquaintance would hardly have recognised her.

"Let me ring for some hot coffee," said Mr. Courtenay; "everything is cold here."

"So I suppose," said Florence, languidly; "I know I'm late."

"Very natural!" said Courtenay, going up to the table; "What shall I do for you?"

"Oh! nothing at present; I'll only take some coffee," said Florence. "What a horrid

rainy day it seems. Where's Mrs. Reynolds?"

"She does not show—she is wiser than you Miss Reynolds—she keeps close till she has recovered her fatigue."

"I look dreadful! don't I?" said Florence, coming languidly to the table. "Whose carriage was that I heard just now?"

"Mr. Young's," replied Courtenay.

"Florence paused, with her hand on the back of the chair she was advancing to the table.

"Mr. Young arrived!" She faltered.

"Yes; didn't you tell me he was coming to-day?"

"But so soon," said Florence.

"A few hours sooner or later, what does it matter?" replied Courtenay.

"Very true!" replied Florence, taking her seat with a dejected air.

"Oh! as you are so soon to become relations, I may show you this note I received

from Ada just before breakfast. She is engaged to be married to Sir Frederic Manning—they have been quick about it, for last night she was rather put out that Sir Frederic didn't—"

Florence was sitting like a waxen image; she seemed neither to see nor hear.

"Are you ill, Miss Reynolds" he asked, stopping short in his relation.

"No; "give me the note," she whispered.

She took it. Ada wrote in the highest spirits.

"As I bored you so with my fancies last night," she said, "I can't do less than give you the earliest news of my engagement. Sir Frederick came this morning—actually before we had breakfasted—and Papa finding that my heart was set upon it, gave his consent at once. Sir Frederic promises to be very good in future; and as for his difficulties, why we can set them to rights. It is so easy, where only money is concerned. By the way, Mamma made me laugh excessively at breakfast, by declaring

that everybody fancied me engaged to Mr. Warrenne Digby. The very nicest person in the world, whom I like extremely; but you know, Charles, how very far my thoughts have been from him, though he does dance the Post Horn Galop to perfection.

"Your affectionate cousin,

"ADA."

The note dropped from her trembling hands.

"Well, are you surprised?" said Courtenay, picking it up.

Florence tried to speak, but she burst into tears.

Certainly! thought Mr. Courtenay, leaning back in his chair, I have no genius for these affairs; I don't understand them. What is she crying about I wonder? She refused Sir Frederic, and now she wants him back again. Ah! that is it.

"I really wish I could offer to be of some assistance to you," he said; "but in a case like this it is utterly impossible—he is lost to you for ever."

To his infinite surprise she slid from her chair on her knees, just before him, in an agony of tears. What now? he thought to himself—but he did not make any enquiries—he merely attempted to raise her—she resisted him.

"For Heaven's sake!" she said, "let me appeal to your compassion once more. I was mad last night—in my distress I begged you to let our engagement proceed. Break it! break it!—things can be no worse—I can suffer no more, whatever may be my father's displeasure!—go to him, Mr. Courtenay—go at once! Tell him that at last I have asserted my own will! That I will not marry!"

"Presently," said Mr. Courtenay, succeeding at last in lifting her upon the sofa, and taking his seat beside her.

"My aunt Creswick will receive me," said Florence, "I think she will—I have in this committed no crime—I have allowed myself to be frightened at a shadow—after all, what is it

that my father will withdraw from me?—not his love, not his esteem—I never had them—merely his protection—well, I will learn to support myself."

"But this time, your decision must be final," said Mr. Courtenay.

"It is," said Florence.

"Well then," said Courtenay, "I'm first going to Forrel Court to settle a little business of my own—and then I must proceed to Erlesmede—for Ada will want to talk over her match with me—and then I will bring Mrs. Creswick back with me—for in case there should be anything of a row, you will be glad to have her on the spot. And after dinner I will explain to Mr. Reynolds how we stand."

"Oh, thank you! how considerate—you have indeed been very kind throughout."

"You will give me a character then," said Mr. Courtenay, taking up his hat, "if I should feel disposed to enter the service of another lady. *Au revoir!*"

It was still raining hard—Courtenay ordered his horse, and galloped immediately to Forrel Court.

As he entered the library, Maud turned hastily from the casement and came to the table where she had been drawing in water-colours.

"You were looking out of the window," said Courtenay.

"I was;" returned Maud, "I have read till I am tired—painted till I am tired—and I am idle to-day—I was actually watching the rain —as if that would do any good."

Then suddenly recollecting that he had ridden through it, she said,—

"I should not wonder if you were wet."

"No; I had a mackintosh—not that you would mind if I were."

"I mind the weather though," said Maud, seating herself at her drawing frame—it makes me feel so dull. They shouldn't have let you in; Papa and Leonard have driven over to

Erlesmede this morning, to see Karl—but I suppose the rain made them compassionate."

"I meant to come in, at any rate," said Courtenay. "I'm come for my gardenia."

"*Plaît il?*" said Maud, looking up.

"I left it on the mantel-piece in the ball-room," said Courtenay.

"Mr. Courtenay," said Maud, "if the servants had found *you* on the mantel-piece, it is possible they might have taken care of you; but I'm afraid there is no chance for your gardenia. However, if you wish it, I'll ring and enquire."

"No; let us talk," said Courtenay.

"To be sure," said Maud, leaning over her sketch and painting very busily. "How did you like the ball?"

"Not so much as I expected" said Courtenay, "I danced but once with you—you were always engaged."

"How are they all at Heathfield?" asked Maud.

"Oh! we have had a scene this morning," said Courtenay, "Miss Reynolds has discarded me—don't you pity me?"

"What have you been doing?" exclaimed Maud, holding her brush suspended.

"Nothing, I give you my word—she finds I am not to her taste."

"Well—that can't be wondered at!" said Maud, turning round and searching among her colours.

"Are you in earnest?" said Courtenay.

Maud made no answer—she went on turning over her paints.

"For some time past, we have understood each other that the affair should proceed no farther," said Courtenay; "but we closed accounts this morning."

"Ah, indeed!" said Maud, who did not like to appear too much interested by his news.

"Well, Miss Warrenne, what do you think of it?" asked Courtenay, drawing his chair to her side, and looking over her sketch.

"Think of it, Mr. Courtenay, what a question!" replied Maud, half laughing.

"Well?" said Courtenay.

"Why, I think this—that a great deal is now cleared up which seemed mysterious in you—and a great deal still left in obscurity; which is one element of the sublime you know."

And then she dashed a great dark mass of shadow half across her sky.

"I wish you would leave off painting and talk to me!" said Courtenay.

Maud laid down her brush—turned her chair a little round—clasped her hands in her lap, and gave him a look from her great sparkling grey eyes, half comic, half amazed.

"Well, Mr. Courtenay, it is for you to begin," she said.

"There is no weather that could long make you dull," he exclaimed, fascinated by her manner.

"Very well," replied Maud; "now shall I go on painting, if you please?"

"What do you think of me? tell me frankly," said Mr. Courtenay, looking earnestly at her.

"Well then; I *will* tell you, Mr. Courtenay—in reference to this affair of course."

He made a sign of assent.

"It always appeared to me," said Maud; "that you had no attachment to Miss Reynolds—you will tell me that it was not your way to attach yourself to any one, very likely—you can't help that; but when you think for a moment to what people pledge themselves when they marry—Good Heaven—with indifference, perhaps even contempt at your heart, to take those vows! You have had a very narrow escape!"

"I have; I feel it," said Courtenay. "I looked down upon Miss Reynolds, yet in this affair she was more consciencious than I—that is not a thing to be forgotten."

"Miss Reynolds appears to be very much improved," said Maud, wishing to say some-

thing, and feeling more and more embarrassed that Mr. Courtenay chose to confide his private affairs to her.

"Not my way to attach myself to any one," said Courtenay, after a silence of some minutes, during which he had been turning about her pencils and brushes in an abstracted manner. "Why, the impression *you* made on me when a child has never been effaced! You have been the plague of my life for the last two years! ever since I met you at the Creswick's! You drove me to offer myself to a woman I did not care for—I love you. I know you are not engaged. That is enough—you shall not escape me again. We will settle the rest at our leisure!

"I hate you with my whole heart!" exclaimed Maud, bursting suddenly into tears, and disengaging her hand with some difficulty from his. "You are always rude! You don't know how to behave to a woman! You have no business to talk to me as if I had no voice

in the matter—you treat me very ill—and I hope with all my might I may never see you again!"

Here she dried her eyes hastily, and walked to the window.

"If you mean every word of that," said Courtenay, following her; "if you thoroughly hate me, let us say good-bye to each other—I will never come into your presence again. If I cannot obtain your regard—if you do not understand the love I bear you, I can do without it—let us part at once!"

He held out his hand.

"You are the proudest, most obstinate, disagreeable creature I ever saw!" said Maud, with a sob in her voice; "I don't want you to go away altogether—I am used to your company—you know I should miss it, and that makes you so ill-natured!"

"Oh! I don't mind your abusing me," said Courtenay, taking her hand, "that's a matter of course!"

"You never said a thing to me," continued Maud, wiping her eyes at intervals, and still leaning her head against the window, "that might lead me to think you liked me; we always quarrelled—that was amusing—but you never expressed your feelings; and now you talk as if I could not comprehend a loyal attachment—as if I was a wretch!"

"Oh, I think you a wretch!" said Courtenay, drawing still nearer to her, "that is the reason I wish to marry you as soon as possible."

"Talking so roughly about marrying," said Maud, colouring over neck and brow, "and never having said one civil thing to me since I first saw you."

"Never having made a catalogue, like Little Red Riding Hood, of your features," said Courtenay, smiling. "'What fine eyes you have got, grandmamma! What fine teeth you have got, grandmamma!'—I thought you knew all that without my telling you. Besides,

you don't give me much time; for until this morning I have not been quite at liberty to express the admiration I really feel for you."

"And if you did care for me, how shockingly you have behaved," said Maud.

"I have."

"It would have been bad enough if you had not cared for Miss Reynolds; but when you cared all the time for some one else—"

"Worse and worse," said Courtenay.

"And I don't believe you are really feeling sorry for what you have done."

"Not at this particular moment," he replied.

"And again, if you have the least idea that I ever intend to leave papa, you are quite mistaken," said Maud, her eyes filling fast with tears.

"You shall do as you like; we will stay with your father, and he shall stay with us; that is easily settled."

"Us!" exclaimed Maud.

"You and me," replied Mr. Courtenay, quietly.

"I wish you would go," said Maud, still looking steadily out of the window, and finding some difficulty in keeping back her tears; "you ought not to have been admitted. I wish you would go."

"So I will directly," said Mr. Courtenay, without offering any lover-like opposition to the request; "I have plenty to do; I expect we shall have a great row this evening with old Reynolds."

"What, does he not know yet?" asked Maud, turning round eagerly.

"Not he; the lawyer has just arrived to make the settlements."

"How curious! I wonder how the explanation will go off," exclaimed Maud.

"As I have every intention of coming over here to-morrow," said Courtenay, "I shall then be able to tell you."

"It is a great price to pay for one's news,"

said Maud, "that you should be the bearer of them."

"Ah, you can't help yourself! I won't take a denial," said Courtenay; "but as you have such fine eyes, let me recommend that you don't spoil them with crying."

"I was not crying!" said Maud, indignantly.

"I thought you were," said Courtenay, venturing to touch her wet cheek with his lips; "good morning."

CHAPTER XII.

D. A. Moor.—O—meine Aussichten!—Meine goldenen Traume!

Die Rauber.

Anls.—Death comes to all. Grief only strikes the heart
That hath some gold mix'd with it's baser metal;
And such are found but here and there commingled
(As gems among the pebbles on the beach),
With the unnumbered multitude. Most men
The Angel passes by as he disdained
To temper with the eissel and the gall
Their coarser clay—for they have eyes and see not
Ears that hear not, and hearts that cannot bleed.
But salve the arrows point with threadbare sayings
As—"death is common"—"man is born to grieve"—
"We must all suffer"—and then turn again
To feed—and sleep—and murmur—and forget.

Anon.

"WHAT on earth could Courtenay have to say to my father," said Leonard, coming in almost

as soon as Mr. Courtenay had left the room; "he met us just as we drove up to the door, and begged 'to have a few minutes conversation with Mr. Warrenne.'"

"Why you see, Leonard, that—he is such a very odd person—this Mr. Courtenay," said Maud, looking rather confused; "he took it into his head—he came here to say—he's so foolish—that man!"

Maud walked quickly to the window, and back again.

"Why what had he to say then?" said Leonard, smiling.

"Oh! he has been so stupid—he has managed so badly, that his engagement with Miss Reynolds is entirely broken off," said Maud, as carelessly as she could.

"Off! you don't mean it?" exclaimed Leonard, rushing towards her.

"I do, indeed; very clumsy he must have been," said Maud, smiling.

"But, my dear—broken—so very near.

Oh! Maud, you are dreaming—quite—utterly broken off?"

"Utterly, I should hope," said Maud; "since he has had the assurance to—make the agreeable to me."

Leonard caught his sister in his arms—then rushed to the bell.

"My horse, directly!" he exclaimed as the servant appeared.

"Where *are* you going?" asked Maud.

"To Heathfield," he said; and left the room as he spoke.

"Oh! I see; how blind I have been all this time," said Maud, looking after him as he gallopped from the door; "and the grandfather was right after all—how provoking."

Florence went to sit with Mrs. Reynolds in her boudoir, after her agitating conversation with Courtenay.

Mrs. Reynolds, in her delicate white dressing gown was half lying on a sofa, engaged

upon some pretty little frivolous bit of needle-work."

"Well Florence, dear," she said looking up; "I'm half-dead. How are you?"

"Not very well," replied Florence.

"I think you want a little change," said Mrs. Reynolds; "if you were not so very soon to be married, I think I would ask papa to take us to Brighton or Leamington. Have you settled where you are to go for your wedding tour?"

"No," said Florence. "Do you think," she added, with some hesitation, "papa would take it so very much amiss, if I were to determine to remain single?"

"Oh! my dear, don't breathe a word of such a thing! Papa is so doatingly fond of Mr. Courtenay—and he really is such a delightful man. When his father dies he will have a beautiful estate. I am sure if I were single I would not hesitate a moment—think what a duty it is, my dear Florence, to settle well!"

Here Mrs. Reynolds' maid came in to say that Mr. Warrenne Digby was in the drawing-room, and desired to see Mrs. Reynolds.

"To see me? In this *peignoir*—I can't go down—dearest Florence, just go and see him for me. Tell him his ball was divine, and that I was in extasies the whole evening! and say that I thought his waistcoat in such good taste! and that Maud looked most beautiful, and broke no end of hearts—and—Oh! ask him the name of the man who played the harp—I should not wonder if he could give me a few lessons—he had a very fine finger."

It was impossible for Florence to refuse, however reluctant she felt to fulfil this mission—she descended the staircase with a beating heart. Leonard rose hastily and bowed, as she entered—they had not shaken hands since—oh! ages ago.

Although she had, as Sir Frederic said, lost very much of that brilliancy of complexion which the finest painting could not have

rivalled, the beauty of her features and the singular grace of her movements would always render her conspicuous. She seemed to him as beautiful as ever.

"Mrs. Reynolds has not yet left her room, Mr. Warrenne Digby," said Florence, taking her seat; "she is easily fatigued, even when she is most amused, so she has sent me to say a thousand things on her part to you about your charming ball."

"It was you I wished to see," replied Leonard, in a trembling voice. "I asked for Mrs. Reynolds that she might procure me the privilege of saying a few words to you alone."

Her heart seemed to contract, as if she could neither breathe nor speak. He felt as he used to do, when a glance from her had the power to make him change colour.

"I am occupied with but one thought at this moment," he said; "it is that you are free."

Florence turned as pale as death.

"If the past were impressed on your heart, as it is on mine," he continued, "as the first great sorrow I ever endured, I might ask you if you remembered that I once pledged myself to offer you all the aid in my power, if you should ever need the help of a brother."

Florence covered her face with her hands.

"At that time," said Leonard, "such an offer must have appeared to you presumptuous, at least, absurd—for I was utterly without resources, and in a condition of life that—that hardly excused even the desire I felt to serve you."

Florence could not speak—her tears fell through her fingers.

"Yet, even then," he said, "my devotion hardly merited to be repulsed with so much scorn—a love so hopeless is bitter enough in itself—and mine was hopeless, though you can never tell how true!"

Her head sank on the arm of the chair; her face still hidden by her hands.

"Do not think that in alluding to the past I mean to reproach you with your scorn—I would only recal to you that I then placed my future life and means at your disposal. And I may be permitted to look back with some pride upon my attachment, since it has survived even your contempt. The sternest test, believe me, to which you can put a lover's constancy."

Her emotion shook her from head to foot, but she could find no words.

"Florence!" exclaimed Leonard, throwing himself at her feet, "you are changed since then—a little changed—you are not quite so proud—you will not answer me with disdain, however you may decide! You are not happy; they do not understand you here—your father is even harsh to you. Ah! you do not know how I have felt all that has happened to you since we parted; well, I offer you a home—I will make you happy in it—trust at last to me. In time you will return my love."

"Don't; you kill me!" sobbed Florence, convulsed with agitation; "too generous! I was never worthy of you; but now, when I have lost the beauty that made me vain—even the riches that drew around me so many flatterers—"

"Nay; riches," said Leonard, reproachfully.

"I love you too well to accept," she continued. "I don't know when I first began to love you. I would have given anything to recal that scene when I spoke so abominably; I was mad, I think."

Leonard, still kneeling, covered her hands with kisses.

"Come, sit here," said Florence. "I could die of shame to see you kneeling to *me*."

"You love me—then you accept?" said Leonard, before he rose.

"I do" said Florence.

Leonard drew his chair close to hers.

"You are more beautiful than ever!" he said, pressing her hand to his lips.

"Leonard," said Florence, smiling.

"Call me Leonard," he said. "I am happy now, for the first time since,—say you will be happy too."

"Happy!" said Florence.

"How wretched I was at that ball," said Leonard.

"And I," returned Florence.

"I never thought you loved Courtenay," said Leonard.

"No, never," said Florence.

"That beautiful hair," said Leonard.

At this moment Mr. Reynolds opened the door, and walked straight into the room.

Florence uttered a cry of terror. Leonard went directly up to him.

"Mr. Reynolds," he said, "I have loved your daughter for several years; long before Mr. Courtenay ever saw her. I learn for the first time to-day that my love is returned; my claim is earlier than his—I entreat you to grant me her hand."

"Mr. Warrenne Digby," said Mr. Reynolds; "I am flattered and proud that you distinguish my daughter by your regard. Had your application been earlier, I should have been truly happy to have received it favourably —indeed, so highly do I esteem you, that I can hardly tell on which my preference would have fallen, you or my excellent friend, Mr. Courtenay. But my word is given to him, and it would be very injurious to my daughter, if after her former conduct, there were any vacillation now in her proceedings; her last decision must be irrevocable—I would never pardon her breaking her faith to Mr. Courtenay."

"Papa!" cried Florence, sinking at his feet, do not destroy me! I have suffered so much that I can bear nothing more. Forgive me; I can never marry Mr Courtenay."

"It appears to me," said Mr. Reynolds, "that you have a very erroneous opinion of your duty. I came into this room, expecting to find Mr. Courtenay here, that I might have

his advice upon the settlements which Mr. Young is now sketching out in my study. I did not anticipate any scene of this nature. I am perfectly astonished that you hesitate for a moment in the fulfilment of your engagement; but I remind you that I lend no sanction to such duplicity; in another month you would come to implore me to break with Mr. Warrenne Digby. You had better rise."

She tried mechanically to obey him, but in doing so, she reeled, and fell heavily to the ground.

Leonard rushed to her, and raised her from the floor.

"Good Heaven! Mr. Reynolds, she is dead!" he cried, observing with a pang of terror, that, instead of the paleness that accompanies a swoon, her forehead was deeply flushed.

"You are mistaken," said Mr. Reynolds, glancing at his daughter, and then crossing to ring the bell. "Florence has fainted; a very

common practice with young ladies when they are agitated—the result of a weak habit of indulgence, which is indeed too prevalent in the present day."

Leonard, on his knees beside the sofa on which he had placed Florence, was pressing her cold hand to his lips. He did not seem to heed this explanation.

Louise entered, but not being able to carry her young lady without assistance, Mr. Reynolds, desiring Leonard to await his return, took her up in his arms, and bore her to her room.

When he returned, he placed two chairs just opposite to each other (it is singular that all his ways were angular), and assuming one himself, he signed to Leonard to take the other.

"I wish explicitly to state to you," said Mr. Reynolds, "that under any other circumstances I should be deeply gratified by the preference you have shown my daughter. I do not wish

you to go away with the idea that I undervalue your character, or that I am not sensible of the very excellent establishment it is in your power to offer to your wife; but you must be aware that Florence has been too much talked of already. Another change would occasion all kinds of surmises. It is my duty to shield her name as long as she remains under my roof; and I beg you to understand it is on this account and on no other that I am induced to decline your addresses. Until Florence is married, you will comprehend that it is desirable, for both your sakes, that you should not meet; but afterwards, I hope I may be allowed to number you among my most valued guests."

"Pardon me," said Leonard, "I am hardly capable of attending to what you say—I am occupied with but one idea. Will you allow me to ring and enquire how Miss Reynolds does?"

Mr. Reynolds in reply to this remark laid his watch down on the table.

"It is now three minutes since I left her," he said, "we must allow a quarter of an hour for these attacks—she will then be as well as ever—I will send to ask after her in that time."

He sat looking grimly at his watch.

"Mr. Reynolds," said Leonard, "I can but hope that your decision is not final—that for a mere feeling of etiquette you will not destroy the happiness of our lives. If you had ever loved, you would feel the cruelty of your present determination."

"Like most young people," said Mr. Reynolds, "you think your present feelings are to last your life—you imagine that you are never to recover from a disappointment—that because your feelings are ardent, they are also indelible. Dreams! dreams!"

He spoke with more softness than was common to him—it seemed as if some recollection crossed his mind.

"My feelings have lasted some years, sup-

ported by no hope—no shadow of probability," said Leonard; "it is therefore likely that they will survive your prohibition."

"When I was young," said Mr. Reynolds, "I also loved a lady as much as you love my daughter. I believe that my love was returned; her father seemed to approve my addresses. At length he died, and left her—a rich heiress if she remained single, a beggar if she accepted my hand."

"I know—I have heard," said Leonard.

"I knew that the generosity of her disposition, would prompt her to forego an inheritance for my sake," continued Mr. Reynolds, "but I felt that such a sacrifice was unreasonable for her to make or for me to claim. I felt that in urging her to follow me to the unhealthy climate where my own prospects led me, I not only demanded her to risk health and life, but to resign opulence and indulgence in her own country. I felt that the time might come when she would regret her decision—and for

her sake, not my own, I resolved to resign my pursuit of her hand. I was aware that explanations would but render our parting more difficult and painful—I therefore denied myself even a farewell—and left this country never to see her again. Yet I have lived to wear out this remembrance. You have yet to experience the beneficial effects of time."

"And this man thought he did right," said Leonard, to himself, "it is in vain to appeal to him."

"You will now permit me to enquire if Miss Reynolds has recovered," he said, rising mpatiently.

At this moment Mr. Courtenay and Mrs. Creswick entered the room.

"Oh, Mrs. Creswick," said Leonard, "I am in the greatest anxiety about Miss Reynolds—I fear she is very ill, let me intreat you to go up and see her."

"I'll step up to her directly," said Mrs. Creswick, and she left the room.

Mr. Courtenay then advanced to Mr. Reynolds.

"I must absolutely beg to decline fulfilling my engagement with your daughter, Mr. Reynolds," he said. "She has declared to me her positive repugnance to my addresses. Her heart is entirely occupied by another person. (I should not wonder if it were you Moonshine, after all.) Under these circumstances no man of honour can for one moment think of urging his suit. However, then, I may regret that I shall no longer enjoy the advantage of your alliance, I must positively and finally withdraw my claim."

Mr. Courtenay then bowed with an air of decision, and stepped back a pace—as if he said, (for all his gestures were expressive,)—I back out of the concern altogether!

"Then Mr. Warrenne Digby," said Mr. Reynolds, "as Mr. Courtenay declines marrying my daughter, from honourable though perhaps rather fastidious motives, I have no

longer any reason for withholding my consent from you. I give it you with all my heart—may you be happy together."

As Leonard pressed the hand which Mr. Reynolds extended towards him, Mrs. Creswick appeared on the threshold, pale, calm, and breathless.

"Mr. Reynolds," she said, "I don't quite like my niece's appearance. I should be glad if you would send for Mr. Warrenne. I know he is at Forrel Court; and I am sure he would kindly come."

"Has she not recovered from her swoon?" asked Mr. Reynolds.

"She is quite insensible," said Mrs. Creswick, "but she is not fainting, for she breathes: and this it is that alarms me."

"My father is at Forrel!" exclaimed Leonard. "I'll go directly. I'll bring him—I—"

"Sit down," said Courtenay, observing that Leonard's sudden paleness, the more striking in so dark a person, rendered it probable that

he would not reach Forrel at all. That is your horse. I'll ride him over, and find Mr. Warrenne."

He was off directly.

"Oh! my forebodings; oh! my golden dreams," murmured Leonard covering his face and quoting unconsciously the exclamation of old Moor in Schiller's drama.

"Do not alarm yourself," said Mr. Reynolds calmly; "Florence is probably nervous. I will go up and see her myself."

Mr. Warrenne was soon at Heathfield. Mrs. Creswick took him up to Florence. Mrs. Reynolds was seated by the pillow terrified. Mr. Reynolds with his arms folded standing at the foot of the bed.

They had undressed her, and she lay breathing as if in a deep sleep—her beautiful hair scattered all over the pillow.

When Mrs. Reynolds saw Mr. Warrenne gravely examining his patient, and particularly feeling her head as if he suspected that she had

given herself a severe blow in falling, she felt it to be serious, and burst into tears. Mr. Reynolds led her from the room.

Mrs. Creswick, always active and self-possessed, lent Mr. Warrenne every assistance in applying the usual remedies. But every attempt to restore her to consciousness proved vain.

"She is in a state of coma," said Mr. Warrenne; the agitation she has undergone has been too much for her nerves, weakened by previous indisposition. It would be a satisfaction to me if you would send for a physician."

"But your own opinion," said Mrs. Creswick earnestly.

"Is, that she will not live twelve hours!" replied Mr. Warrenne.

Leonard, who had begged to be allowed to remain in the house "until Miss Reynolds should be better," for he could not bear to glance at the other alternative, spent his time

in pacing up and down the drawing-room for hours; sometimes stopping to lean against the wall from exhaustion, then beginning to walk again. Courtenay, who sincerely pitied him, would not leave him alone; but he was wiser than to rack him with consolations.

It was indeed a hard trial to lose her just when every difficulty was made smooth, and after so long and hopeless an attachment.

Mr. Reynolds went himself for the physician. He had four horses to his carriage, and he calculated that he should bring him by daybreak.

Mrs. Creswick looked despondingly at Mr. Warrenne. She thought it was likely that all would be over by that time.

He consented to stay that night at Heathfield. He said himself that he could be of no further use; that the physician was for the survivors, and not for the patient; but as his presence was a comfort to Mrs. Creswick, he was willing to remain. He tried to persuade

his son to go home; but nothing would induce Leonard to stir from the house while she lived. Indeed, with the pertinacity of people in great mental suffering, he could not be made to believe the extent of her danger—he fancied that a favourable change must occur.

Every ten minutes he paused in his hurried walk to beg Mr. Courtenay to go upstairs and enquire how Miss Reynolds was going on.

Mr. Courtenay never hesitated in going up directly, and came back with exactly the same message—that no favourable change had occurred.

During the early part of the night Florence lay breathing heavily, to all appearance in the same state; but in a few hours her breathing became more faint, her pulse weaker; and now and then there stole across her face and limbs a contraction which told to the experienced eye of Mr. Warrenne that the end was not far off.

Then Mr. Courtenay had to bring back the message—that she was gradually sinking.

Leonard's despair was terrible, and therefore silent. He seemed crushed when he found that no interval of consciousness was likely to intervene—that he had spoken to her for the last time—that all the thousand things he had to say and ask must now remain for ever unspoken. Some people never suffer in this way; but those who do, grow old under it.

Yet still Mr. Courtenay had hardly brought him news when he entreated him in an accent of despair to go again.

"It is a little like the treadmill," said Courtenay to himself, as he quietly ascended the staircase for about the hundredth time; "but everything has an end—I think I hear the carriage."

Leonard waited for his return, usually so rapid, but no footsteps came—the cold dawn was stealing in across the shutters—at last a lighter step approached—he sank down on a chair with a foreboding at his heart—Mrs.

Creswick, her eyes dimmed with tears, came to his side, and laid beside him a long silken ringlet of fair hair.

Florence had just breathed her last.

At that moment the carriage stopped at the door — Mr. Reynolds had brought the physician to see his daughter.

CHAPTER XIII.

Our own life seemed then
But as an arrow flying in the dark
Without an aim—a most unwelcome gift
Which we might not put by. But now what God
Intended as a blessing and a boon
We have received as such; and we can say
A solemn and a joyful thing is life,
Which being full of duties, is for this
Of gladness full, and full of lofty hopes.

Trench.

Perhaps it may occur to some persons that when Mr. Reynolds found his daughter was actually dead, there mingled with his natural regrets some shadow of remorse for the harshness with which he had treated her. Not at all, I give you my word. He believed himself

to have been the tenderest as well as the most judicious of fathers, and went into an ecstasy of admiration whenever he remembered how he had posted up to London with four horses to fetch the physician, rewarded him with fifty guineas, and sent him back again after breakfast.

Leonard demanded, almost as his right, that he should be the chief mourner at her funeral; he felt that it would be almost a sacrilege were any one to fulfil that duty who had loved her less than himself — and Mr. Reynolds was so far touched by his unfeigned grief, that although he was very much under the influence of what people might say, he acceded to his request. For once his feeling prevailed over his sense of etiquette—he was second at his own daughter's funeral.

Mr. Reynolds then caused a splendid monument of white marble to be erected in Forrel Church, as if (Mr. Courtenay said) he was quite determined that Leonard should

never hear the last of it; and then, having done everything that propriety and affection could dictate, he dismissed the subject from his mind, and would have been almost puzzled if any one had alluded to his lost daughter.

On Mrs. Reynolds it had more effect; she was a good deal sobered by the shock. And yet *she* had nothing to reproach herself with—she had been uniformly kind to Florence—she had done nothing but stand in her place.

"I suppose, if you are not a cannibal," said Maud, drying her eyes as Courtenay finished giving her an account of the funeral which had just taken place; "you are glad that you behaved tolerably to poor Miss Reynolds—now that she is dead."

"Not being a cannibal," replied Mr. Courtenay; "I make a point of behaving tolerably to people whether they live or die."

"What will become of poor Leonard I don't know," said Maud; "he shuts himself up and never speaks a word. Papa can do nothing with him."

"He does very wisely," said Courtenay. "I dare say there is nothing he wishes to make known, and therefore he is silent. The first thing to be decided is—what will become of *us*; when I have got you to make up your mind upon that subject, I will find out what to do with Leonard."

"You take things so coolly," replied Maud; "I think I should die happy if I could once see you cry."

"Well, when you are about to die, let me know, and I will try to accommodate you."

"You are a hateful person!" said Maud. "But still I will own it was kind of you to give Leonard that beautiful miniature of poor Miss Reynolds."

"Yes—it was very liberal, as I did not at all want it myself," replied Courtenay; "I

shall soon replace it—directly I get you to town, I shall make you sit to Thorburn."

"I won't live in London!" said Maud.

"Don't," replied Courtenay; "we will live in Devonshire."

"That's so far from Papa," said Maud.

"We will take a house then at Erlesmede."

"I don't like the Erlesmede people," said Maud.

"Depend upon it they are just like all other people," said Courtenay; "the breed is everywhere the same. When they see you with two or three carriages, and so forth, you will find them the sweetest, most complaisant creatures in the world."

"Many thanks to them," said Maud.

"Well, we need not trouble ourselves to fix in a residence till we have fixed when we are likely to be in want of it. Come—what say you?"

"I suppose you know," said Maud, "that all the neighbours imagine to this day, that

you were on the point of marriage with Miss Reynolds; it would, therefore, not be very decent in you even to think of such things at present. If you could manage to show a little more feeling, it would not disgrace you, when you consider that everybody is pitying poor Mr. Courtenay's sufferings!"

"Come, this won't do," said Mr. Courtenay; "you and I are so well matched in our veneration for 'people,' that it is of no use to quote what they think in support of your perverseness."

"I will be perverse!" said Maud.

"I dare say you will—you always have been," said Mr. Courtenay; "but I advise you not to provoke me, or I will run off with you to Gretna Green before you know where you are."

"I would soon make you repent it," said Maud.

"Come, since you care so much on a sudden about what everybody says," exclaimed

Courtenay, "I will go round to all the neighbours, and tell them the whole history. I will inform them that I would have married you two years ago, but that you were so proud and self-willed, you actually did not know your own mind; and that you can't make it up now, from fear of their sovereign displeasure. I will ask them severally if they don't think it very hard, under all the circumstances, that I should be kept dawdling about any longer, and I will bring back their votes in my hat, together with the day they think proper to fix for my wedding. Won't that do?"

"I'll never speak to you again!" exclaimed Maud.

Courtenay took up a book.

"As to caring what people think of me," said Maud, turning quickly round, after a few moment's silence; "I'll tell you how much I care! I choose to act so scrupulously that they shall have no shadow of an excuse for finding fault; and then, if they wish to abuse

me, let them. It is perhaps rather a compliment."

"Oh! you are soon come to life again," remarked Courtenay, looking up.

"Did you hear what I said?" asked Maud.

"Perfectly," he replied.

"And did you see how it applied to all the nonsense you have been talking?" she asked impatiently.

"No; it did not seem at all to bear upon the case in point," he replied; "but it was a very good remark—a very good remark."

"Now that I never will forgive!" exclaimed Maud.

"Quel travail delicat,
"Cet ouvrage de femme est d'un gout, d'un eclat!"

said Courtenay, looking over the work-frame at which Maud was employed.

"That's from Delavigne—you have been reading "Les Enfans d'Edouard," said Maud, taking up Courtenay's book.

"Certainly it is no difficult task to make you speak," said Courtenay; "not like the old woman in the Scotch song—

"Get up and bar the door."

"How I hate you!" exclaimed Maud.

"Well, how long do you mean to keep me waiting?" asked Courtenay.

"A hundred years," said Maud.

"And suppose I won't wait?"

"That would be best of all," said Maud; "for it is entirely against my will that I have anything to say to you."

"I know how I'll bring you to reason," said Courtenay. "I'll fetch over Mrs. Creswick to Forrel; she will reduce you to terms. I know you are afraid of her."

"Afraid of her?" echoed Maud. "She is the best friend I have in the world. You can't do better than drive her over to-morrow morning; she will be sure to take my side."

"We shall see," replied Mr. Courtenay; and accordingly the very next morning he drove over to Erlesmede, and brought Mrs. Creswick back with him.

"So my dear Maud," said Mrs. Creswick, as soon as she entered, "you are resolved I find to put your lover's constancy to a pretty strong test; he has waited already two years and a quarter, and you still think it advisable to put him off. Well, I hope it won't be for very long."

"Oh, he has been telling tales of me as you came along," said Maud, darting an angry glance at Mr. Courtenay, who stood quietly leaning against the window.

"Saved you all the trouble of the explanation," he remarked.

"And what time do you really mean to fix for your marriage?" asked Mrs. Creswick; because, you know, when you talk of a hundred years, why we should like some of us to be alive to see the day."

"Especially the principals," remarked Courtenay.

"How I hate his dry ways!" exclaimed Maud.

"Some day you will come to me and say—How I like his dry ways!" said Mrs. Creswick.

"That she will," said Courtenay.

"Now listen, Mrs. Creswick," said Maud. "I ask you if that disagreeable person, leaning so awkwardly there against the window-frame, is not a widower in the eyes of the world?"

"Almost, I am afraid," said Mrs. Creswick, smiling.

"How soon is it thought decent for the hardest hearted and most unfeeling widowers to marry again?"

"Mr. Courtenay?" said Mrs. Creswick, hardly able to refrain from laughing at her manner.

"A hard-hearted widower is permitted to marry again in six months," said Mr. Courte-

nay, coolly; "but when his heart is extra hard, as in the present case, it is thought reasonable that he should be kept waiting only five weeks."

"What say you—shall he be judge in his own case?" asked Mrs. Creswick.

"No; that he shall not!" said Maud.

"We both agreed to refer our cause to you," said Courtenay.

"Did I?" said Maud.

"Ah; now you want to draw stakes," said Courtenay.

"No; I think Mrs. Creswick will take my part," said Maud.

"One says five weeks, and the other says a hundred years," said Mr. Creswick.

"Five weeks is perfect nonsense!" exclaimed Maud, eagerly.

"And I am sure so is a hundred years," said Mr. Courtenay, laughing.

"Then I think we will treat him as one of the hard-hearted widowers," said Mrs. Cres-

wick. "My dear Maud, in six months I may congratulate you by the name of Mrs. Courtenay."

Maud was received with ecstasy by Mr. Courtenay's father, and his two maiden aunts, when upon her marriage they went down into Devonshire. The old gentleman was a finished specimen of an older and a better school than the present time can show. She found a stately mansion, an extensive park, everything on a grand scale. The single aunts richly and quietly drest, with the air of perfect gentlewomen, did the honours of their brother's house with a pleasing tranquility. It was evident that everybody idolised Mr. Courtenay—everything he said, did, or thought, to the veriest trifle, was registered and adopted. His father looked up to him—his aunts would certainly have walked up to the chin in the lake that ornamented the park if he had dropped the

slightest hint that he should like to see them in such a situation. These kind-hearted ladies were also tormented with anxieties respecting his diet—which to a man who never cared and hardly knew what he ate, was rather an unnecessary trouble. They would draw Maud aside after breakfast, and enquire whether she had noticed his preference for any particular dish—would fear that their country cook was unable to prepare the sort of dishes he had been accustomed to in London—would try and surprise her into confiding to them whether he preferred peas to cauliflowers—or turkey poults to spring chickens: they disturbed themselves greatly that their melons were backward that year, because he had once in a fit of absence asked for melons with his cheese instead of radishes—and they became quite agitated whenever they gave a party to know exactly what neighbours he would wish to invite, and whether he liked many or few guests at a dinner.

Maud always said they were a thousand times too good to think about him at all, and that he had better answer for himself—to which end she used to call him, and make known to him the subject of discussion in her own way. "Come here and thank your aunts for wishing to know whether you like green peas; or, tell your aunts that you never in your life saw such fine strawberries as they gave you at dessert yesterday; or, assure your aunts that you don't eat melons—and let them know that their cook is equal to the man at the University Club." Mr. Courtenay gravely echoed her remarks, and left his aunts in perplexity at Maud's boldness, and his wonderful amiability.

Maud, for his sake would have been upheld as the model of all earthly excellence, but her beauty, gaiety, and good temper so won their hearts, that they really did not know how to pay her homage enough; indeed the old Mr. Courtenay remarked to his son that it appeared

quite wonderful that with such a brilliant creature as Maud in the neighbourhood, his choice should in the first instance have fallen upon Miss Reynolds. Mr. Courtenay quietly replied that it was rather singular—that there was no accounting for tastes, but that as Miss Reynolds was lost to him, he thought he had supplied her place indifferently well. This conversation happened to pass in Maud's hearing, and the kind aunts looked nervously at her, fearing that she might be pained at being reminded that she had not been first in Mr. Courtenay's regard—and the eldest of the two, who had once had a disappointment, whispered to her that people, especially young men, never did marry their first loves—and that she hoped Maud had firmness enough not to mind what Charles had said.

Maud assured them that she had sufficient firmness *never* to mind what Charles said—and as a proof of it, she was going to ride a horse

that very day which he had expressly forbidden her to mount.

Although he had an odd way of expressing his attachment, Maud had every reason to believe that it was unbounded. He made good what he had once said to Florence—that he could never refuse anything to a person whom he loved. He never opposed Maud's fancies, even when he most disapproved of them. He would coolly say, "I think it very absurd, there is no sense in the thing; but if you wish it, do it."

When she found that this was always the case, the natural generosity of her disposition prevented her making an undue use of his indulgence.

In the autumn they went abroad with Leonard, and they all remained in Italy during the winter. When he returned, his friends had no longer occasion to sigh over his morbid inactivity. The suffering he had undergone forced him to turn to the business of life in

order to forget its sorrows; and although many years passed before he was able to admit that another woman could ever possess his heart, yet at last, to the great joy of his family, he gave a mistress to Forrel Court. He "waited for Lucy." At seventeen she was a warm-hearted amiable girl, and beautiful as a dream. She was always very much with Maud, which Mrs. Reynolds encouraged in the hope that some day something might come of it; and great was her joy when she at last heard that her daughter and Leonard were actually engaged to be married. Mr. Reynolds was equally pleased at the match. He had a vague idea that he owed Leonard some reparation for not having been able to give him his daughter; and, like many hard people, he had taken a singular fancy to him, scarcely inferior to the affection he felt for his own son.

Ada Thomason was as happy as could be expected, considering all things. Sir Frederic was very fond of her, but he was always getting

into difficulties, and then Mr. Courtenay had to be sent for to put things straight again.

Mr. Thomason had prudently tied up his daughter's fortune so carefully, that it was not likely she would ever be actually reduced to beggary; but money was always a source of perplexity to both of them; for Ada was just as improvident as her husband.

Mrs. Thomason liked the match, however. It gave her something to sigh about. Sometimes she could lament over her poor daughter Lady Manning, who was about to increase her family. Sometimes she could moan over Sir Frederic's extraordinary whims and fancies, which were indeed enough to try anybody. Once he fitted up a yacht, and carried Ada off to Iceland; and his first child was born off the coast of Norway. Then he started with his whole establishment for Lisbon, and took a villa at Belem for the summer. Now he would threaten to pull down the Manor House; and

then he would build up all sorts of odd towers at the corners, and talk of turning it into a castle. Poor Mrs. Thomason had need to remember that Ada was a Baronet's wife, and that a good many young ladies would have been very glad if they could have taken her place, to bear up against the perpetual terrors that assailed her from the Manor House. He built a sledge, and nearly drowned himself and Ada in driving over the ice. He met with all sorts of accidents with hurdle-racing and steeple-chases. But whenever they came to London, Lady Manning was cited everywhere as a great beauty; and, though Mrs. Thomason assured her intimate friends that nobody knew what her daughter's trials and troubles really were, they were both tolerably contented with the lot she had so wilfully chosen.

Mrs. Stapylton married all her four daughters. She managed to engage Mr. Sharpe to Albina, without his having any suspicion of what she was about until it was

too late. Report does say that she locked him into the drawing-room one day alone with herself, and there went through such a scene of maternal despair, that even he was softened, and he compassionately offered, if it would be any satisfaction to her, to marry her daughter.

Mr. Meek married Sarah; aud when he got a living, the next curate married Emily, who had devoted herself to the Sunday-schools when the Cornet of Dragoons went away. And Laura married an old man, who did not dislike red hair.

Manœuvring mothers are sometimes represented as failing, but they much oftener succeed. Only when they do fail, they retire from the field covered with ridicule. But Mrs. Stapylton, who succeeded, was quoted all over the county as the best of mothers.

The military cousin, whom Leonard used to envy, was last heard of in the Greek Isles where his regiment was stationed, and whence he used to send every now and then to borrow

money from Mr. Courtenay. As he was perfectly incapable of doing any good, he naturally looked about to see if he could do any harm. (I think it is Bolinbroke, who remarks somewhere that the one is a very ordinary consequence of the other;) and having gone over to Athens, not, I assure you, with a view of indulging in any classic reminiscences, but merely in the hope of having some fun, he was enabled to break to pieces the head of a figure, in one of the finest friezes in the Parthenon.

This was a valuable achievement—for the head was said to be singularly beautiful, and the frieze in a high state of preservation, until it was so cleverly mutilated. Moreover the enthusiastic Greek who takes care of the Parthenon was thown into a state of despair and grief bordering on frenzy at the destruction of one of his beloved marbles. So that the military cousin had even more fun than he expected, and was very much admired

by his companions, though their eulogiums fell far short of those he bestowed upon himself.

It is singular that a fatality seemed to pursue the five degraded wretches who made Miss Reynolds' fortune the subject of a wager. The fate of Captain O'Neill, and of Captain Le Grange has been mentioned—the Count de Merville fell in his turn in a duel at the Bois de Vincennes—Mr. Taylor was drowned at a regatta, and Mr. Roxby's lot was perhaps even less enviable; married to a rich old woman of the most revolting temper and habits, and held up to the derision of all his acquaintance, from the base submission with which he bore her tyrannical caprices.

And Mr. Warrenne lived tranquilly among his children. Keeping up nominally his old house at Erlesmede, where Karl still reigned over the white horse and the greyhound;—but dividing his time as equally as possible

between Maud and Leonard; for Alice had her share when he was at home—the distance being near enough to see him every day.

He lived pursuing his botanical researches, and writing his botanical treatises—and doing good to those who were in want of assistance—and almost softening even the acrimony of Mr. Ranger by the mildness of his religious practice—but not—thank Heaven! —*not* loved and respected by every body around.

Valued by those who honoured worth—and loved by all who sought to imitate the benevolence of his life—he was altogether disliked by those who are afraid of moral dignity, and to whom integrity is a reproach. But he had always been thoroughly indifferent to the applause of men:—he did not care and he never sought to inform himself of what people said. He was happy enough in his own family to let the world judge as it pleased

—and moreover he was singularly happy in being able no longer to call himself—a Medical Practitioner.

THE END.

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